

M.S.C

CHORLEY, KATHARINE C.

HILLS AND

WAYS.

17. NOV. 1973



LONDON BOROUGH
OF
LEWISHAM
LIBRARY SERVICE

Author _____

Title _____

BOOK STORE

Books or discs must be returned on or before the last date stamped on label or on card in book pocket. Books or discs can be renewed by telephone, letter or personal call unless required by another reader. After library hours use the Ansafone Service (01-698 7347). For hours of opening and charges see notices at the above branch, but note that all lending departments close at 1 pm on Wednesday and all libraries are closed on Sundays, Good Friday, Christmas Day, Bank Holidays and Saturdays prior to Bank Holidays.

METROPOLITAN
SPECIAL COLLECTION

HILLS AND HIGHWAYS



THE TWO GREAT MELODIES OF THE MOUNTAIN FUGUE, THE ADAMANT
CORE OF THE HILLS AND THE DYNAMIC FORCE OF WEATHER

HILLS AND HIGHWAYS

BY

KATHARINE C. CHORLEY



Decorated with wood-engravings by
MARGARET PILKINGTON



LONDON & TORONTO
J. M. DENT & SONS LTD.
NEW YORK: E. P. DUTTON & CO.

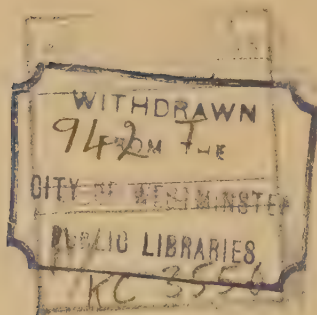
1928

MSC

942

CHO

All rights reserved



PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

FOR
E. H.
HIS MEMORY
AND
A. H.
AND
R. S. T. C.
COMPANIONS OF THE CHOICEST DAYS

*Would that once we four together
Had climbed the sunlit crag,
Bathed in the pool of rowans,
And run down the fells at twilight
To the farm in the valley.*

*Aye, and would that we had seen together
The rise and fall of an Alpine day,
Heard the scrape of bootnails on rock,
The skirl of the axe when the ice-flakes scatter,
Known the shared life of the rope—
You and you and you leading in turn
And I rich by my comrades.*

NOTE

OF these essays *Vagabond Holiday Makers*, *Lake Country Inns*, *Spring in the Cairngorms*, *A Cumberland Centenary*, and *The Poetry of Peasant Speech* have previously appeared in "The Nineteenth Century and After" and are included here by permission of the Editor.



CONTENTS

	PAGE
I. VAGABOND HOLIDAY-MAKERS	I
II. LAKE COUNTRY INNS AND INNKEEPERS	20
III. THE UNKNOWN GORGE	36
IV. SPRING IN THE CAIRNGORMS	47
V. FLATLAND	60
VI. HILLS, PLAINS, AND THE PAINTER	80
VII. A CUMBERLAND CENTENARY, 1926	100
VIII. THE EARTH AT DAWN	118
IX. AN ENGLISH HUMORIST	142
X. CROSSING THE CHANNEL	169
XI. THE POETRY OF PEASANT SPEECH	187
XII. CITIES OF THE PENNINES	202
XIII. ANTÆUS.	221

HILLS AND HIGHWAYS



VAGABOND HOLIDAY-MAKERS

PERHAPS the most delightful book that has ever been written by a vagabond holiday-maker for the entertainment of his fraternity is Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*. Yorick, as Sterne paints him for us, is, of course, the ideal of a vagabond holiday-maker ; and so, we may imagine, must Sterne himself have been, or else he could not have created Yorick. He never observed Yorick at second hand. Yorick's whimsical holiday humours were surely bubbling up irrepressibly from his creator's own heart. The book is bright with golden touches which appear so spontaneously that it is impossible to believe they were merely the result of objective observation, golden touches whose true ore can only be recognised and appreciated by sentimental travellers or vagabond holiday-makers. Take, for example, one casual remark made by Yorick on his first evening in Paris when, as we are told, he had "got from under his barber's

2 VAGABOND HOLIDAY-MAKERS

hands " and " walked forth without any determination where to go." " I shall consider of that," said Yorick, " as I walk along." This little remark seems unimportant enough to a superficial measure, but to the initiated it is full charged with meaning. Examine it, and you will find a key to the vagabond philosophy.

Your whole-hearted holiday-maker never knows when a chance impulse will urge him or some stray delight beckon him from a mapped-out course, so how should he set forth with an adamant purpose as to his ultimate destination or the various stages on the way? He considers of these as he walks along. For he has learned by experience two small truths; firstly, that pleasures unexpected and unprovided for are generally the best; and secondly, that the spirit of a wandering holiday may only be captured by transforming himself into a kind of Aeolian harp on which the impressions and desires of the wayside may play what tunes they list. Once cut those workday moorings which hold a man in unadventurous and stagnant waters and some sort of new instinct springs to the helm; and if he abandon himself unreservedly to its steering, and simply keep his five senses alert and as perfectly prepared as he can make them for receiving every passing impression, then it is amazing how the new instinct seems to guide him wherever the greatest number of delightful impressions and sensations may be found.

It is true, of course, that these casual ways do sometimes entail certain minor discomforts. Chance arrangements involve chance inns, and a whole tale of horrors might be unfolded about the food, for instance, sometimes

•

served in roadside inns. Fortunately, however, the vagabond holiday-maker, when he turns into a roadside inn, is generally fit and well exercised, which means that he has a sturdy and not over-discriminating appetite ; he is also incurably romantic, so that he is able to force a kind of relish into the consumption even of blue-veined mutton chops or fried ham of the texture and toughness of shoe leather that has been drenched in the rain and then dried before a quick fire. This accomplishment may argue a low stage of gastronomic evolution, but it does undoubtedly provide certain compensating advantages, and you cannot have everything. The attitude is precisely that of Don Quixote sitting, it will be remembered, on the first evening of his search for adventures, outside a miserable little inn, supremely satisfied with himself and his surroundings and eating with real enjoyment dried fish and a loaf of bread as black and mouldy as his armour, having first firmly convinced himself that the dried fish were fresh trout and the loaf the finest white bread.

The vagabond holiday-maker's casual experience, however, by no means always involves situations—even gastronomic situations—which can only be enjoyed by playing a game of quixotic make-believe. If you insist on three-starred Baedeker hotels, you may ensure a faultless table d'hôte dinner served punctually every evening at 7.30, but then you forego that purer joy which may come of gnawing a chicken bone left over from your packet of luncheon sandwiches as you sit resting in the twilight on the bench outside a Swiss farmhouse, with a great cup of milk beside you, while

4 VAGABOND HOLIDAY-MAKERS

behind you rises the long winding path you have just descended from the mountains and before you stretches the road you will soon be following by moonlight to the valley. Again, if you believe implicitly in a prearranged time-table and think of it as unalterable and containing all things necessary for salvation, then you will be tempted to regard the fortunes of the way which may upset it in the bitter light of works of supererogation instead of welcoming them as possible examples of unexpected grace. You will, for instance, fail to appreciate the chance of an unpremeditated supper-party like the one Yorick had with cheerful Lyonnais peasants when he was forced to ask for shelter at their farm the evening his horse lost two shoes in half a mile on Mount Taurira. It is hard to refrain from quoting entire the couple of chapters in which Yorick so engagingly describes his supper-party, for they contain the essence of that peculiar pleasure which may be distilled from a vagabond holiday. The peasant family, an old grey-headed man and his wife with five or six sons and sons-in-law with their wives and a "joyous genealogy," were all sitting down to their supper of lentil soup and wine and wheaten bread when Yorick walked in. The old man rose up to greet him and made him sit down at their table, and Yorick, borrowing the old man's knife, with quick tact and perception, cut himself a big slice of the loaf. "And as I did it," he says, "I saw a testimony in every eye, not only of an honest welcome, but a welcome mix'd with thanks that I had not seem'd to doubt it." "Was it this," he goes on, "or tell me, Nature, what else it was that made this morsel so sweet, and to what magic

I owe it that the draught I took of their flagon was so delicious with it that they remain upon my palate to this hour ? ” I think the answer is easy enough ; it was the magic of Yorick’s own light and unspoilt heart that made him appreciate the peasants’ simple welcome and know how to win it. And the episode shows the vagabond holiday-maker in the happiest of his aspects—namely, in his relations with his fellow-men.

It is curious how the tramp spirit modifies a man’s attitude towards his fellows, making him believe somehow in the solidarity of humanity with a satisfaction and a certainty that never comes through the formal relationships of ordinary social intercourse :

They pass, I also pass, anything passes, none can be interdicted.

None but are accepted, none but shall be dear to me.

You know nothing beforehand about the people who cross your holiday paths ; you have no preconceived notions about them or their works. They are just men and women in the abstract, gradually one and another assuming individuality as you stop to speak by the wayside, to ask a direction or to glean some scrap of local lore ; or you may sit opposite some person in the coffee-room of an inn, perhaps, and chat across the table, and his mind for you will be so much virgin ground to survey as best you can, with none of the accepted and conventional guides, but only your instinct for human character to help you. From these chance encounters there is often an elusive and strange virtue to be drawn out and inexplicably absorbed into your own self. Sometimes,

6 VAGABOND HOLIDAY-MAKERS

to obtain this virtue from the people you fall in with, it may not be necessary even to speak ; you may just watch them and feel glad to count yourself with them a member of the same great family of man. And these chance images are indelible. I do not think, for instance, that there will ever be effaced from my mind a certain picture of an old Norman fisherman. He was a very tall man, spare and erect, with a long white beard and features which were a reminder of the strength and repose and harmony of classic sculpture, and he paced up and down the quay of a Normandy fishing village with back and shoulders set and a lithe swing from the hips that ought to have belonged to a young fellow of five-and-twenty. He wore one of those cross-striped shirts which are the common dress of most French peasants, and he had a leather belt strapped round his waist in a springing curve which accentuated the swing of his hips and seemed in some way to be a guarantee of the yet enduring strength and suppleness of his body muscles. It was wonderful to note his youthful gait and steady shoulders and then to look up at the white beard and clear old eyes and weather-beaten face. We watched him through the door space of the little inn where we were lunching, for the door opened straight upon the quay. And we watched, too, the smacks, with their brown sails set, slipping out to sea through the harbour mouth, and a couple of old women on the pier wrangling about something, the price of fish, perhaps, for we saw the glisten of fish scales between them. We had walked all morning through Normandy lanes, across meadows deeper hued than English pasture land, and then along the grey and yellow-

stained chalk cliffs at whose base we had bathed, plunging into blue, swelling waves margined with foam. That is the way to gain an appetite for *déjeuner*, and we lunched like princes while we watched through the open door the life of the little fishing village. Hot, savoursome shell-fish the inn people gave us, fresh lobster with a sauce sharp and suave, newly caught skate, and then, of course, veal and *petits pois*. Yet, in spite of their appearance at every *déjeuner*, it is impossible to grow tired of veal and *petits pois* in France. And we washed it all down with thirst-quenching draughts of sour Normandy cider. There was no need of quixotic make-believe to enjoy that particular meal.

Some of the happiest memories of vagabond holiday-making are centred in the recollection of certain matchless meals. Perhaps this may be accounted for by the contrasts to which the vagabond's palate is continually subjected, cast maybe at breakfast into a nethermost culinary pit where even Don Quixote's imagination might have failed him and then lifted, perhaps, at lunch into an epicure's seventh heaven which could have satisfied Lucullus. At any rate, there are meals which take on in retrospect an almost sacred significance, standing as symbols for contentment and good fellowship and the joy of strong physical life. One summer week two of us were wandering happily with no fixed purpose about the Yorkshire dales. Do you, X——, remember the mist across the moors from Gordale Scar to Malham Cove, and then how the mist lifted, and the sun shone, and we sat on the strange primeval slabs of rock at the top of the cove, looking down over the limestone precipice

at the stream which springs out at its foot and trickles off through the meadows whose gaudy colouring that afternoon melted gradually away into the hazy tones of the receding valley? And you have not forgotten the meal next day? At Threshfield there is a low-walled inn built of grey Yorkshire stone. It stands beside the road, and as we drew level we saw the front door invitingly open and beyond a cool dark hall. We were hot and dusty and tired of the glare of sun on the high-road, where the dust seemed almost alive with a horrible dancing vitality. So we turned aside at the invitation of the open door and twilit passage. A woman met us and took us through the parlour, and we stepped out of a French window straight into a retired and demure and unassuming corner of fairyland. Yet it was only a tiny garden, cool and tranquil to the eye and enclosed by trees and shrubs. The grass was cropped so close that you would have thought there could be no harvest left for the shears of a mowing-machine, yet an old gardener was diligently mowing, walking slowly backwards and forwards so that the passage of his machine raised and flattened the shorn grass-blades in alternate strips of delicately contrasted green, until the lawn took on the appearance of watered silk. And the sound of the machine made a pleasant accompaniment to our meal, for presently we were brought new bread and yellow butter and Wensley Dale cheese and two large jugs of shandy-gaff; and there is no other drink that slips so easily as well-mixed shandygaff past a thirsty and dusty larynx.

There were two of us on this modest little expedition into fairyland, and this raises a vital question on which

vagabond holiday-makers seem always to have held divided opinions : Is it more satisfactory to cut yourself off from associations that might jar some delicate mood and wander away alone, hunting your own thoughts, sharing with yourself the delights of your own impressions, making a sympathetic and surprisingly intelligent audience for your own penetrating comments, selecting unhampered the particular method and speed of locomotion that appeals to you, staying at the inn of your own uncurbed choice—in fact, abandoning yourself generally to a temporary existence of sublime egotism ; or is there not, on the other hand, a keener enjoyment to be extracted from the give and take, the laughter and talk of companionship, the chink of two or more pairs of nailed boots ringing in unison on a hard road as easy swinging strides cover the last miles to supper ? Let us call in the experts. Hazlitt, for instance, whose opinion must carry great weight, prefers to be solitary. Companions irk him. “ You cannot read the book of Nature,” he says, “ without being perpetually put to the trouble of translating it for the benefit of others.” He is the apostle of sublime egotism. He wants to savour the best moments of his holiday in a kind of Olympian isolation. “ They are too precious, too full of solid, heartfelt happiness to be frittered and dribbled away in imperfect sympathy. I would have them all to myself and drain them to the last drop.” But Hazlitt makes an exception. He liked apparently to have Coleridge with him as a companion tramp, and he relates one noble walk—I doubt if it was a mile under the thirty-five—when he and Coleridge and John Chester tramped from

Nether Stowey to Lynton, arriving at Lynton at midnight. Their way lay over the Quantocks and through Blue Anchor and Minehead, and then, I suppose, across the heathery seaward slopes of Exmoor, and "our feet," says Hazlitt, "kept time to the echoes of Coleridge's tongue." And this is a unique compliment to Coleridge, for elsewhere Hazlitt remarks uncompromisingly that he cannot see the wit of walking and talking at the same time. But he tells us about Coleridge that he possessed that rare gift of being able to unravel the mystery of his being at every turn, making others take an interest in it as well as himself. "He could go on," says Hazlitt, "in the most delightful explanatory way over hill and dale a summer's day, and convert a landscape into a didactic poem or a Pindaric ode." However, as so very few of us are privileged to go for thirty-five-mile walks with such persons as Coleridge, we may as well put this little outburst of friendliness aside as not germane to the argument and go on to find which of the other experts agree with Hazlitt's general conclusion. Robert Louis Stevenson, for example, is a most loyal disciple of Hazlitt, and has served up the philosophy of "sublime egotism" garnished with all the allurements of his intimate pleasant prose. None the less, as he admits himself, he cannot write like Hazlitt. He was, moreover, always falling back in support of his own arguments on the very words uttered by the master, which, when you come to think of it, was rather selfish of him, for he has extracted all Hazlitt's plums and left us only the pastry and minor fruit of the pie for the flavouring of our ideas. Still, Stevenson can be forgiven a great deal for the single remark of his that Hazlitt's

essay *On going a Journey* is so good that a tax should be levied on all who have not read it.

Among modern experts we have Mr. G. M. Trevelyan, and he is less dogmatic on this score of companionship. He has expressed his view in the course of a comprehensive and altogether excellent treatise on the theory and practice of walking, and walking may be taken as the foundation of most vagabond holiday-making. Mr. Trevelyan begins, it is true, by maintaining that solitude is probably an essential condition of the perfect walk, that is, the walk during which it seems that the highest expressions of which body and mind are capable have fused into one singing unity of delight. But in his next paragraph he repents a hasty judgment and qualifies what he has just written : " A companion may be good if you like him well, if you know that he likes you and the pace and that he shares your ecstasy of body and mind." Then follow a couple of fine pages in which our expert recalls his tramps with a friend through the Apennines and pays tribute to the satisfying pleasure of happy comradeship.

It seems to me that Mr. Trevelyan strikes the right note. No golden rule may be formulated on this vital matter. It is no doubt chiefly a question of an individual's temperament and also of his particular passing mood. There are occasions when the beauty and splendour of the external world seem to penetrate every fibre of the being, and for a moment the whole universe is focussed sharply through a lens whose measure can never be wilfully recaptured. Then it seems absolutely necessary to be alone. But these moments of insight come so rarely that, generally speaking, comradeship

adds the final note necessary to complete the scale of vagabondage. But it must be the right comradeship. You require interlocking temperaments whose moods will supplement and enhance one another and will always be reacting in the accordant relations of a composed whole to circumstances and to external impressions. When the world pipes to you, you and your companion must share a desire to dance. It will never do if the same music moves one to be merry and another to be dismal. Suppose, as often happens when wandering over a countryside, that a single tree seems suddenly to detach itself from the collective aspect of the landscape and to individualise itself for your delight, assuming for some mysterious reason a distinct and fascinating personality; you will halt perhaps and remark to your companion: "Just look at that tree!" And if he turns his head and gazes coldly with a lack-interest air, saying nothing, then what a raw chill freezes your warm heart which is only wanting to open out like the petals of the little rock-rose to the rays of a sympathetic sun! How irritated, for instance, must Boswell have been in his heart of hearts—although he humbly pretends to stand corrected for inaccurate observation—when he went through Glenshiel with Dr. Johnson.

"There [said I], is a mountain like a cone."

Johnson: "No, Sir. It would be called so in a book; and when a man comes to look at it, he sees it is not so. It is indeed pointed at the top; but one side of it is larger than the other."—Another mountain, I called immense.—Johnson: "No; it is no more than a considerable protuberance."

It is simply this fear of discord that makes Hazlitt and his followers prefer to take no risks. On the other hand, though it is true that you can never wholly guarantee yourself against this danger of comradeship, yet you can make pretty sure of congenial tastes and, if you do this, it is well worth running a risk of miserable failure for the chance of winning a certain priceless reward of success—that glowing friendly emotion which is never born of social relations artificial and elaborate, or of the press-gang fellowship of convenience, but which breaks only, a pure spring of humanity, out of a shared reaction to elemental things, wind and sun and rain, the stress of the weather, starlight and hills, streams and rowan trees that overhang their mountain pools.

Now, if your companion have better tuned senses than your own, then indeed fortune is smiling. On this account, the tramp likes to go forth sometimes with painters so that he may profit by their trained eyes and learn how to discipline his own. For the painter's vision is sensitive to beauties of form and contour and colour, contrasts and harmonies in the relations of tone and light and shadow, those refinements and subtleties which make up the supreme prize of sight, but which, nevertheless, the untrained seer, when left to himself, fails entirely to perceive. And again, for like reasons, it is well to have occasionally a naturalist companion of the way. I confess that without some external stimulus I never seem to take proper note of the wonderful intricate details that make up the great pattern of landscape, ever changing as you wander from hill to hill, up narrow valleys or across broad plains. And it is pleasant to be drawn into

appreciation of those gems which fuse into the gleaming whole; the flitting butterflies, the daintily devised flowers of the field and the hedgerow, the spring-time nests with their treasure of eggs, the shy-eyed creatures that peep a moment and dart off at a rash approach. For, whether it be in lifting up his eyes to the hills, or in searching for the loveliness at his feet, it is only a man's imperfect and insensitive observation that puts a film over his sight and prevents him from gazing upon the face of nature in all its unmisted brightness and beauty.

Of course, the tramp's opinions on the rival merits of comradeship or solitude are coloured largely by his conception of the perfect evening after the day's way-faring is done. Hazlitt, it seems, liked to be incognito at his inn, to appear simply as the "gentleman in the parlour"; he wanted to divest himself of all the old associations that a friend would naturally link with him, and he liked to chat exclusively with the people he met with on his journeys, the natives who would stroll into the inn for their evening beer and who "partook of the hue and character of the place." Moreover, Hazlitt enjoyed browsing over some book in the evenings. He mentions sitting up half the night at Bridgwater, after being drenched all day in the rain, and reading *Paul and Virginia*, which he picked up at his inn. But in another essay he locates this at Tewkesbury, and here is a serious slip on Hazlitt's part, for every incident of a true holiday should be fixed indelibly in time and place by the chemistry of happy memories. Hazlitt also refers to the *Nouvelle Héloïse*, which he read one evening in the inn at Llangollen—it was April 10, 1798—over a bottle of

sherry and a cold chicken. But Stevenson has already, of course, salted the tail of the quotation. Stevenson himself asserts his fondness for *Tristram Shandy* or Hazlitt's own essays. He is a great believer in the special savour which that after-supper hour should impart to reading.

"If you read a book [he says]—and you will never do so save by fits and starts—you find the language strangely racy and harmonious ; words take a new meaning ; single sentences possess the ear for half an hour together ; and the writer endears himself to you, at every page, by the nicest coincidence of sentiment. It seems as if it were a book you had written yourself in a dream."

As for Mr. Trevelyan—to complete our trio of experts—he suggests that "you may be in the seventh heaven with a scene of *Henry IV.*, a chapter of Carlyle, a dozen 'Nay, Sirs' of Dr. Johnson, or your favourite novelist." It would be interesting to know who it is has the honour of being Mr. Trevelyan's favourite novelist. For my own part, when I have been for a long walk (particularly if, like the walk Hazlitt mentions, it was in the drenching rain) and eaten a good supper, a desire for blissful canine repose in front of the fire steals over me, and I have no wish at all to be giving my intellect even the mildest carriage exercise. But I do remember once, after a misty tramp over Helvellyn, sitting down in the parlour of the inn at Thirlspot and reading between tea and supper half a novel by Charles Garvice which I found on a book-shelf. I am afraid, however, that I must have chosen my book carelessly, for I do not recollect experiencing towards it any of those affectionate feelings which Stevenson describes.

This mention of books reminds me of a tradition—the truth of which I will guarantee—concerning an elderly Victorian gentleman, of eclectic tastes apparently, whose pleasure it was to go for long walks over the moors taking with him as his only companions a Bible and a bottle of champagne. It sometimes happened that an acquaintance would meet him in the course of these peregrinations and ask him what he was doing upon those lonely moors with his Bible and the champagne. “I am,” he would say, “worshipping God.”

But to return to Hazlitt. His scheme for spending his evenings is in keeping with the rest of his vagabond creed. Still, vagabond holiday-makers take pride in being wide-minded, long-sighted, tolerant persons, and it is quite possible to reverence Hazlitt as a high priest of the order without subscribing to all the articles of his religion. Thus, I am bold enough to believe that Hazlitt's conception of the ideal evening falls considerably short of my own. I admit that there is no purgatory more irritating than to be forced to sit through a whole evening with an uncongenial companion whose manner and conversation, as the clock hands crawl slowly onward, begin to set your nerves on edge until you feel as if you were being forcibly fed on mental sloes. On the other hand, man was surely fashioned for friendship, and the care-free intercourse of intimate comrades does make the best and most fitting coronation of the holiday-maker's rich day. Those evenings which slip so quickly past by the fireside of an inn parlour, or while strolling after supper in the fading light about the novel streets of some small strange town, are the seasons, as every vagabond

holiday-maker knows, in which are finally welded those rare enduring friendships joined first by the shared sensations and experiences of some matchless day.

There is in my mind the memory of a certain June evening after a leisurely row up the Isis from Oxford to Bablock Hythe. We had supper at Bablock Hythe. Then, because the inn was full, we walked away from the river a mile or two, crossing in our path the long evening shadows thrown by the roadside trees, and we put up at a tiny public-house which stood a short way back from the road we had followed from the ferry, and whose white-washed walls were half covered with creepers. The village cricket eleven had entire possession of the parlour for a Saturday evening sing-song, so we went out again and wandered into the hamlet and along the lanes. There was a lovable peaceful charm, a healing illusion of permanence, about that Oxfordshire hamlet. We came upon four of its cottages grouped together in one building, but with a separate square of garden to each, and divided from our lane by a narrow stream which flowed alongside the roadway. Opposite each front door, the brook was spanned by a miniature shallow-arched bridge. They were curiously built cottages, with thatched and gabled roofs, the thatch rounding off the angles of the gables into deep, full curves, and their walls were made of bricks or stone, enclosed in a crossed framework of heavy untarred beams. And it was pleasant to stop a moment and allow freedom to the fancy that somehow they and their inmates had happily dropped out of the race at the heels of time. Then we strolled on and leaned over a gate to watch across the fields the dying

sunshine that stained the meadows with a level golden light. There was a strange quality in that light, for it seemed to separate the upright blades of grass in the nearer meadows, singling them out and giving each a form of its own, dark blue-green shapes, slender and sword-like, cut out against the yellow glow where the sunbeams still lay along the fields. And we did not turn back to our tiny remote inn until it began to grow dark and chilly and the earth-clinging air was sweating great drops of dew.

In his *Scènes de la Vie de Bohême*, Henri Murger adapts an old Gascon term for poetry and uses it to describe the errant singers of the Middle Ages. "Les enfants du gai savoir," he calls them, and he suggests that the nineteenth-century Bohemians of whom he writes are their successors. So, also, are wandering holiday-makers. Children of light-hearted wisdom—thus translated, the phrase fits them so perfectly that I am irresistibly constrained to steal it. And what is this light-hearted wisdom? Is it not the faculty in a man for withdrawing himself from time to time from the bewildering ways of civilisation and setting his whole being to nature's versatile tunes? It is to know how to get away for a little from the notice-boards of convention, the fences of callous logic, the temples for sham reverences, even from the lumbering gallant effort to clear away the rubbish and think honestly—to get away into a country where the ancient divinities of the trees and the crops and the streams and the hills are still alive, an unencumbered land of the young, where all may go freely without let or hindrance and no questions are asked. There is one

condition for crossing the frontier. That old pessimist "the preacher," for instance, whose sense of wonder was so shrivelled that he could assert that there is no new thing under the sun, would never have been allowed across. Sophistications and pessimisms and cynicisms must be left behind. For the earth never grows bored and fretful and cynical; and from the earth men replenish their lordly physical life of touch and smell and taste and sight and sound.





LAKE COUNTRY INNS AND INNKEEPERS

“ I always serve t’ lads comin’ over t’ fells.”

TAKE a Bartholomew’s Map of Westmorland and Cumberland, the Half Inch Reduced Survey, Section 3, and a pair of compasses, and with centre Easedale Tarn above Grasmere and radius six inches, describe a circle. It will be a magic circle, for it rings round the great hills of the Lake Country. Yet the diameter of the circle is only some twenty-four miles—a long day’s walk.

Sir Thomas Browne says somewhere in his *Religio Medici* that “ Nature is the Art of God.” If this be so, then it is here as if the painter who was used to work in fresco had curbed for once his hand to paint a beautiful and delicate miniature ; as if the sculptor had laid aside his chisels for the cutting of marble and had carved a cameo. The artist of the soaring Alpine peaks and vast lakes has modelled a Lilliputian Switzerland, seeming on this reduced scale to take a more loving care in the detail and finish of the work, in the subtle gradations of tone and soft, mellow colour, in the curves of the valleys, in the

moulding and just proportion of the fells ; and yet, in spite of the restricted area, sacrificing nothing of the virtue of mountain scenery, that " right blending of the sweet and the stern."

If a man stand on the rough and hilly ground behind Windermere, somewhere on the south-eastern rim of that imaginary circle's circumference, he may behold the mountains extending in a wide arc before him ; to the west, Coniston Old Man and Wetherlam, and as the eyes travel northward, Crinkle Crags and Bow Fell, and looming beyond in the blue distance Scafell Pikes, Great Gable, and the buttress of Great End ; then the Langdale Pikes, rising like the twin, tapering towers of a cathedral, and away to the north, Helvellyn, and to the north-east the broad back of High Street. These are alluring names ; they do not perhaps slide from the lips like a Yeats lyric, but there is a fine native relish and a kind of wild music in the speaking of them.

In the winter, the spectator may see the hills clothed with snow, clearly and delicately outlined against a bright sky and with sere, red bracken and black gashes of bog for a foreground. And on a summer evening, he may watch the sinking sun gild summit after summit, refining away the coarse substance of earth and rock so that the mountains appear at length without volume or solidity, shimmering in violet and rose and golden haze. But, if he have an honest love of the hills in his heart, he will not be content merely to contemplate them thus from afar. He will feel their invitation and understand that they tender their most exquisite gifts only to those

who come in person to seek out and receive their bounty,

“Wouldst thou,” so the Helmsman answered,
“Learn the secrets of the sea?
Only those who brave its dangers
Comprehend its mystery.”

And the mountains are like the sea in that they do not easily lower the veil of their mystery and reserve, and their charms are not yielded up to a facile and effortless wooing.

So, if he would learn the secret of the hills, let him turn his back upon degenerate Windermere with its concrete promenade along the lake, settle his stride to a sober three miles an hour, and brace up his body to the conquest of the high places where

. . . they
Who journey thither find themselves alone
With a few sheep, with rocks and stones and kites
That overhead are sailing in the sky.

Among the grave and tall fells, the “sinister, laughterless tarns,” and silent valleys the novice’s urban sophistries and acquired civilisation will fall away from him and he may regain his primeval unity with nature. He becomes brother to the springing turf, the streams, the dark-browed rocks, kinsman of the weather, even of the lashing rain. Instead of shrinking as he does when the north-easter blows dust and dirt along the town streets, he meets the wind squarely and is braced by the sweeping air which cuts into his flesh. He draws energy almost consciously from the warming, strength-infusing sun. Then, when mist and rain and hail and wind and snow no

longer have power to drive him from the mountains, and his Ordnance Map—grown flabby and dog-eared from use and exposure—has become his most cherished possession, he will be able to assert that he has wrested their secret from the hills.

The true walker or climber is an egotist. Like the Jew of old, he believes firmly in the exclusive destiny of his fraternity to inherit the Promised Land, and he would like to wage relentless war against the encroaching Philistines. Progressive people would call him an obstructionist. He took up his pen to sign the petition against the building of a motor road over the Styhead Pass in the same spirit that a devout Moslem might unsheathe his sword to enter upon a Holy War. He still regrets the desecration of Thirlmere by the Manchester Corporation, and he grieves bitterly over the like fate which awaits Hawes Water. The lean and weather-beaten shepherd whom he meets upon the fells and with whom he discourses about the weather, the hospitable farm folk, the huntsman and whip—fellows of a splendid endurance whom he may chance upon any winter's day following the hounds on foot, for the country is too rough for a horse—the innkeepers whose houses he frequents : these people make up his world, and the position of the last named is that of an autocrat, for one half at any rate of the walker's pleasure depends upon the right quality of his hotel.

From his point of view there are in the Lake District two perfectly distinct classes of hotel : (1) The hotel which is really an inn. (2) The hotel proper which is anathema.

In extension, as they say in logic, the two terms are

more or less identical, but in intension they are poles apart. The word inn connotes pleasant things—crackling wood-fires, the oldest, softest, whitest linen sheets, and good, plain food, eggs and bacon, roast beef and the like. We are reminded of the best inn scenes in literature: Mr. Lorry's welcome at the "Royal George" in Dover after his damp, raw drive from London, the too affable waiter who helped poor David Copperfield to consume his ale and mutton chops and his batter pudding, Tom Brown's delight when his father ordered stout and oysters on the way to Rugby.

A romantic flavour goes with the word in the matter of proper names also. When we hear of an "inn" for the first time, we know instinctively that it will be the "Golden Lion," or the "Dun Bull," or the "Blankford Arms," whereas a mere hotel is always called the "Grand," or the "Metropole," or named after some railway line. There is no magic about "hotel"; it is a prosaic word and stands for endless bad, sophisticated qualities. We think of electric lifts, unhomely lounges where you can't get near the fire, and sleek, frock-coated managers with unpleasantly greased hair.

Between these two classes there is a great moral gulf fixed and, though sometimes an inn or an hotel tries to serve both God and Mammon, their respective spheres are as a rule sharply delimited. The sad thing is that most of the members of Group (2) originally belonged to Group (1), but like Esau they sold their birthrights,—not for messes of pottage, but for six-course dinners and plush-upholstered lounges. Some evil, mercenary spirit possessed them, and now they are content to cater for

guests who, although they may contribute handsomely to a growing bank balance, make little addition to an ancient and honourable reputation. These traitorous inns take advantage of the favourable position which Providence accorded them so that they might prove a blessing to the walker, and they lure the Pactolian passer-by in his Rolls-Royce or his Lanchester with flaunting Automobile Association and Motor Union signs. When he is caught, their landlords ply him with choice, rich food and drink, which he should be ashamed of consuming when he has not exercised one muscle of his body to earn it, and then they add the unforgivable sin of going over a sacred Ordnance Map with him and pointing out the roads and passes over which he can take his car. So, it happens that one evening the walker, never suspecting the metamorphosis his inn has undergone, and swinging home to dinner as usual with his blended memories of sun and wind, the scent of warm turf and the cold embrace of beck water, is disturbed in his pleasant meditations by a raucous motor hooter. His clean skin and good-smelling tweeds are spattered with dirty mud. The odour of the foul exhaust offends his nostrils. He is angered by the winking nickel and glistening paintwork, the faultless chauffeur and the self-satisfied owner wrapped in his rugs. They are out of place, discordant; they remind him of the Iron Age which he had hoped to forget when he turned his back upon its visible sign at the railway station. Later, when he meets the motorist at dinner, the man will still be a source of mental disturbance. The walker marks him down instinctively as the unknown

offender who, before dinner, usurped a place in the scale of bathroom precedence and drained off the hot-water supply. Moreover, how has he worked for it that he should eat his meal so complacently? Has his brow been once moistened to-day by the sweat of honest endeavour? The sight of him sitting there in his immaculate dinner-jacket and boiled shirt will take the fine edge off the evening's contentment. He is an alien, an intruder in the aristocracy of the fells, and his advent is the beginning of the end for that hotel which welcomes him. For soon elements of discord creep in and threaten the fast friendship between the walker and his landlady. They begin to eye one another mistrustfully. The landlady suddenly takes exception to the endless demands for wet clothes to be dried in the kitchen, and the walker complains with a point which the landlady does not miss that the hot-water supply no longer goes round. He may even suggest sarcastically that Mr. X——'s chauffeur uses hot water to clean the car. When he leaves, he says to himself that unless things mend he will not come back, and he hesitates before he signs his name in the Visitors' Book below that of the offending Mr. X——.

This decline in respect for the Visitors' Book is a sure sign of an inn's degeneration, for in the Lake Country the inn's standing is marked by the honour in which its Visitors' Book is held. There are certain books in which the walker knows that it is truly an honour to inscribe his name. The Visitors' Books at Wasdale Head, for instance, have a fine flavour of antiquity: they are heavy calf-backed volumes and date back for fifty years or more, and they contain the signatures of all the great pioneers of English

rock-climbing—men like J. W. Robinson, Mr. Haskett-Smith and Mr. Cecil Slingsby, Joseph Collier and Owen Glynne Jones. Robinson was a native of the Dales and Mr. Haskett-Smith a London barrister, Mr. Slingsby was a Yorkshire millowner, Collier a Manchester surgeon, and Owen Glynne Jones a schoolmaster. The mountains draw their votaries from every craft and trade and profession.

Notwithstanding the insidious advances of the motorist, most of the innkeepers in Westmorland and Cumberland, although sometimes through force of circumstances they bow down in the House of Rimmon, nevertheless reserve their kindest welcome for the walker and the climber. No ill-natured looks from his hostess greet the guest when he comes into the hall after a wet day with squelching boots and clothes dripping little runnels of water on to the floor. On the contrary, she probably has a cheery remark ready and a question as to the success of his expedition; she will bear away without complaint his soaked clothes, and he knows that in the morning they will be left ready for him with the tweed warm and crisp after a night before the kitchen range. Through the sitting-room door ajar he sees a blazing fire before which he may finish his evening in satisfied physical ease, and from the coffee-room are wafted to his eager nostrils odours of the excellent supper that awaits him.

This question of food is very near the walker's heart: it is the one great primary subject which he is never weary of discussing, and, when all other conversational springs run dry, this one may be constantly drawn upon. What use has he for views and theories when every inch of him is in accord with the simple, physical life of earth? He

has no desire to talk, and even if he had he would not inflict his superficial cosmogony upon the hills, for love of them inspires reverence and awe. Above the 2000-foot contour line, intellectual discourse is akin to sacrilege. "Ics" and "isms" violate every law and instinct of the fells and should be confined strictly to the valleys, or at most the lower passes. But the elemental question of food may be argued and thought about without limit of time or space. The earliest Lake Country tramps discovered that. There was one, "Edward Baines, Jun.," who made a tour through the Lakes in 1829, partly on horseback and partly on foot, and afterwards wrote a book of his experiences. Baines ascended the Styhead Pass and describes his joint pleasure in feasting his eyes on the view and his inner man on lunch when he reached the top. And, says he: "Let no untravelled enthusiast despise me for the zest with which I have more than once mentioned the amusement of eating and drinking on the top of a mountain." That was a brave challenge to throw out in 1829, and Baines deserves our admiration. Indeed, his remark ought to be quoted in large type on the title-page of all the good books about mountains which have been published since. It is good to find Hazlitt also with the walker's healthy outlook in respect of food. "I grant," says he, "there is one subject on which it is pleasant to talk on a journey, and that is what one shall have for supper when we get to our inn at night. . . . Every mile of the road heightens the flavour of the viands we expect at the end of it."

Food! The one pleasant subject! Is there a mile of country in the whole district unconsecrated by the

alimentary dogmatisms of the walker : his preference for ham or bacon, his descriptions of never-to-be-forgotten teas served to him in kindly farmhouses, his memories of some peerless sandwich consumed during a ten-minutes' breather on Scafell or the Gable ? For sheer, cheerful, unaffected, unashamed gourmandise, commend me to the walker ! He takes an ardent interest in his diet, from the composition of his packet of luncheon sandwiches to the luscious supper of eggs and bacon which should be the coronation of his day. You poor, blasé London diners who imagine yourselves epicures, what do you understand about a true appreciation of your food and drink ? You haven't souls above oysters and turtle soup and champagne, you drive to your dinner in taxi-cabs ; how should you comprehend the seductive, compelling odour of frying eggs and bacon after a twenty-mile walk ? Why, a golden contentment is begotten of the simple contemplation of an earthenware teapot emitting volleys of fragrant steam with the reflection of the coffee-room fire making cheerful arabesques over its glazed surface.

After the walker has dined, if he have good luck and have served an apprenticeship upon the fells, his host will perhaps come in and sit down by the fire and talk. These Lakeland innkeepers are talkers worth listening to ; many shrewd sayings, the outcome of a hard-headed North Country philosophy, may be gleaned from an evening spent in their company. Their stories have a pleasing, racy savour told in the hazy mental atmosphere of after-dinner contentment, and their hunting yarns are sometimes epic.

There was a certain Grasmere innkeeper, a mighty

walker and a keen follower of the hounds in his day, who delighted to tell a story of how the late King Edward, when a small boy, was once caught by a farmer's wife chasing her husband's sheep on the Grasmere island. The story-teller affirmed that she boxed the Prince's ears with considerable vigour. "Do you know who that is?" said a spectator aghast. "'A don't know an' 'a don't care who 'e is," was the reply. "'A know 'e's somebody's ill-brought-up brat!"

Then, too, there is the excellent tale of the disreputable parson of a remote and lonely parish in the heart of the hills who used to ride over to Keswick and spend the greater part of the week in the bars of his favourite Keswick hotels, returning to his flock only at the week-ends. After a time, things became so bad that his bishop, an easy-humoured man apparently, who did not care for flagellating the weaknesses of his fellows, felt that he must represent to him the evil of his ways. So, the bishop rode over one afternoon to the vicarage, and after he and the offending vicar had supped together, the latter, who was an acute fellow and knew well enough his superior's errand, deftly kept him engaged with grog and pleasant conversation until the evening was well advanced. Then, at length, the bishop cleared his throat, gave a final screw to his courage and drew his subordinate's attention to the ill reports which were circulating about him. "Eh!" replied the accused with a rich Cumbrian twang, "Yer mustn't listen t' them. Why, yer'd be surprized if yer heard t' things they say about yer Lordship; but 'a don't listen t' them—'a just brush it all aside and tak' no notice."

The reputation of this Cumberland parson and of one or two others of more or less similar habits was no doubt responsible for this savoury morsel of dialogue :

“ How’s ——’s boy ? ”

“ ’E’s falling into bad ways. ’E’s runnin’ about wi’ parsons an’ sich.”

Should congenial talk fail for any reason, the walker, with his store of rich memories to draw upon, is perfectly contented leisurely hunting his own thoughts through the evening. He dreams of a tempting April sun overhead and that stinging plunge into a deep, icy pool in the Duddon, and feels still the succeeding delicious glow of health and vigour. He recalls an Easter when the corniced snow clung with scarcely a break for two miles along the eastern cliffs of Helvellyn and Dollywaggon Pike, and he remembers how, looking down over the cornice’s edge, he was struck by the mysterious aspect of Red Tarn, a leaden and lifeless surface broken in the centre by two icebergs. Or, it may seem to him that once again he is gazing overawed upon a December dawn seen behind Elterwater, when the reedy lake took on a fierce crimson reflection and the sky was barred from end to end of his vision by long clouds like streams of blood and charged too with grey, ominous clouds, swollen and weighted by their burden of unshed snow.

When the guests in the true inns are of the right sort, absolute trust and friendliness exist between them and their landlord. Once, two walkers came to an inn towards the end of a long day. They were sufficiently tired and thirsty and desired with all their souls a drink before tackling the last rise and the last eight miles of

their walk. It was out of hours ; however, they appealed to the landlord and were told to go into the solitude of the billiard-room, and presently two tall glasses were brought to them by the landlord's wife. She said, as she put down the tray : " I don't know who you are. For all I know you may be detectives, an' if you'd been some of those as comes in motors, I wouldn't have given it you, but I always serve t' lads comin' over t' fells." Could there be a surer expression of trust, or a higher meed of praise ?

The walking fraternity do not limit their patronage to the well-accredited inns ; they put up sometimes with the farm-people. There is a kind of sober, homely romance about the Lake Country farmhouses. It is good to knock at the door of one and pass straight from the windswept and lonely fells into its cheerful kitchen. The smooth stone flags of the floor chink merrily to the tread of nailed boots and the firelight curves and flickers about the heavy oak dresser and the oak settees which stand against the walls, pieces which would cause a connoisseur to smack his lips with envy and relish. Flitches of bacon and legs of ham hang suspended from iron staples in the ceiling, and above the spacious open fireplace a great black pot, dangling from an iron hook, simmers all day.

Away up in the wet and rough valleys there is little scope for the growing of crops or hay. The mind receives the impression of an almost primitive cultivation ; grey stone farm-buildings, a sparse patch of oats, badly laid as a rule by the summer rains, two or three acres of bright green pasturage, then on every side the short, dead grass, the rocks and bogs, the bracken and heather

of the untamed fells. But the Cumberland and Westmorland farmers are great sheep-graziers. The shepherd and the shepherd's dog are of chief importance in their economy. A farmer who would appear to be in a very small way, judged by southern standards from the extent of his cultivated land and the size of his farm-buildings, will probably possess several thousand sheep which he grazes upon the fells. There is one farmer in the Buttermere valley whose sheep have won so many prizes at the big North Country shows that he has been able to paper his parlour with the certificates !

Some of the Lake District farms have acquired a reputation as far-reaching and as well-deserved as that of the great inns. The inns are scattered over the whole district, but each and all they are known by experience or repute to the walker. There is one in Eskdale and another in remote Mardale, under sentence of death, alas ! for when, in course of years, the waterworks about Hawes Water are completed and the level of the lake is raised some forty feet, the old inn, the few cottages and the little roadside church must be swallowed and submerged by the invading waters. A third, perched on the highest point of the road between Buttermere and Crummock and celebrated for a charming hostess and sumptuous teas, stands foursquare to the winds and rain which race through Newlands and Honister, lashing with the sound of a musketry discharge upon the streaming panes of the dining- and sitting-room windows. A fourth, built of the native slate, stands at the foot of Dungeon Ghyll, and here there is pleasant occupation for a wet day, for the landlord is something of an expert in the literature of the district and, if he be approached

tactfully, will bring out his queer old books and leave them with his guest for a morning's entertainment. In Patterdale village, there is another true inn, and the landlord possesses a book of old and rare woodcuts of the hills and waters and valleys of the Lake Country. But the most famous inn of all is in Wasdale.

Soon after the Styhead footpath reaches the green valley divided by thick stone walls into squares and triangles of pasturage, it is joined from the right by a narrow lane. Where this lane enters the mainroad to the coast, near the miniature whitewashed church in its little enclosure planted with yew trees, stands another whitewashed building, at right angles to a big, grey stone barn and backed by the stream which tumbles down from Black Sail. It is the Wasdale Head Hotel, the Mecca of climbing-men. In the hall are rows of tremendous hob-nailed boots and rubber climbing shoes. A couple of ropes are coiled about the baluster knob. There are ice-axes in the umbrella-stand and an elusive odour of dubbin and wet tweed pervades the atmosphere. The coffee-room is of the old and gregarious type with one long table running down the centre of the room. Round the walls hang photographs of great climbs and renowned climbers, including a fine enlargement of Will Ritson, the celebrated landlord who reigned in Wasdale a generation ago. The older climbers have many good reminiscences of Ritson, his well-spiced northern wit and fine-flavoured stories. "Eh, mon," he is reported to have said to a young hunting enthusiast, "thou maun be lang i' t' legs and lank i' t' guts ere thou canst follow t' hounds."

The bathroom used to be of only secondary importance to the dining-room. It possessed two baths: the first bearing but a scanty covering of paint, but still for use; the second very ancient, covered with an old table-cloth and mysteriously unattached to any waterpipes. Underneath the table-cloth was the strangest assortment of old clothes, coats, breeches, knickerbockers, trousers, stockings. These were kept for the benefit of those walkers and climbers who carry their baggage on their backs and have no change of clothing when they come in wet from the fells. Is there another landlord in the United Kingdom who would undertake to provide a well-stocked wardrobe for the free use of his guests?

If Wasdale is the climber's Mecca, then his Koran, the sacred writing to which he turns for guidance, is a well-thumbed manuscript book in which are recorded for future generations by the men who first made the ascents all the major climbs in the district with their variations. This book is kept under lock and key, and is never shown to any guest unless he can produce satisfactory evidence that he has a right to be numbered among the elect. The first sight of it is like an initiation, lifting the novice to a plane above his fellows. It means that he has been admitted an equal member in the Free Company of walkers and climbers, and when, at the end of his holiday, he is bumping down the road to Drigg Railway Station in the landlord's disreputable Ford, he will feel, as he looks back for a last sight of the giants of Eskhause, that next year, when he returns to Wasdale, it will be of right and not of grace, for has he not received the freedom of the fells?



THE UNKNOWN GORGE

WHEN we are children, we have our best chance of plucking the skirts of mystery. None of the mysteries which rustle by us in later years, the wonder of religion, of art, of human affection, of life itself brush against our senses so sharply as the wonder which clothes places to the eyes of a child. As we grow older, reflection comes to blur our impressions, speculation lures us into shifty regions where the senses cannot find a purchase ; we analyse almost in the act of feeling and therefore waste the concentrated energy of our sensations. Worst of all, perhaps, we find that the earth has a history ; places begin to fit into an ordered scheme, they have a past and a future as well as an enthralling present, they are related one to another. Instead of being self-sufficient and unique personalities, they are examples of a class. But when we are children none of these burdens of the mind affect us. It is our time to apprehend and win the physical world. We do not analyse ; we take what we see for granted and as an isolated fact. We have no traditions, no links of history to suggest to us

generalisations, no conventions to refer to as a guide to what we ought to be feeling. And so there is no veil drawn between us and the naked feel of things. We roam about the world ready, unconsciously, to take the imprints of experience and, without our knowing or questioning anything of the process, an imprint is fixed. Some bit of the earth suddenly comes alive and smites us to enchanted attention.

It seems to happen on this wise. A healthy child spends most of its time in a dreamland made out of the elements of the actual world. Its imaginations about people and things carry on from day to day and from month to month and, so soon as elders leave it to itself, it slips away into its private world—the real world of its fancies. Any world of the fancy seems real so long as its atmosphere is consistent. In this way, for instance, the London of which Dickens wrote is real. It is not the actual swarm of people which we know in our daily contacts ; it is an entirely strange London made by the work of Dickens' imagination in breaking up the old and then creating a new city of his own from the old elements. No one ever knew a Marchioness or a Mrs. MacStinger or an Artful Dodger in actual life. But Dickens' imagination was strong enough to complete his own London, to cut it off entirely from the everyday world and let it exist through its subjective vitality. We have but to enter Dickens' world in order to know his people more really and definitely than a dozen of the folk we may have met yesterday. They are substantial and the others are wraiths. After a fashion, this is what the child does. It takes half unconsciously the bits of the big vague

world of actuality which appeal to it and constructs with them a little vivid world of its own in which it lives at the heart. And the whole of the actual world which it has not brought into its organisation fades into unreality. But the child is always adding to its dream world. Every now and then some scent or sound or scene from the actual world strikes in imperiously and claims attention. The child's senses quiver on the brink of unrealisable adventure ; and then it takes the events which have stirred it and incorporates them in the dream and, in later life when the grown person has put away childish things and looks back across an interval of time, the impressions stand out above the submerging years as magnetic points about which the electric currents of mystery still play.

Beauty has very little to do with the matter—taking beauty to mean some gathering of shapes and tones and colours which give a man joy by reason of their arrangement. Perhaps beauty is reserved for us to appreciate when we lose the other more primitive and poignant faculty. It is generally a scene apparently unimportant that makes the child's memorable impression. All that occurs is that some wood or field or stream, even a bit of the home garden, suddenly detaches itself from the surrounding vagueness and exists as a fact by itself—a fact to marvel at. So, at any rate, it seems to me on looking back to my own childhood. It was always the small thing that wound the horn of my dream castle and claimed admittance, the fragment of the earth which I had happened upon through my own resources perhaps ; for the pleasure of discovery was in it. There was a

wood, for instance, through which I once conducted an uncle and aunt who little dreamed of the thrills of sensation that were running along my small nerves. It was a mile or so farther than the farthest point on the usual nursery round, and one got to it by crossing a new field—new at least to me—which stopped abruptly on the verge of a steep slope pitted with sandholes. From this edge one looked for miles over a plain, misted green and yellow and blue, and in the distance saw smoke clouding thinly across the sky and the grey and silver spurs of hills. After the field came the wood; a wood of pine and birch and undergrowth of bracken, whose entrance allured and whose exit was unknown, of whose very existence I had never been apprised until that moment. I passed in dumb with wonder. To find this within a morning's walk from home; it was almost incredible. Other woods there were which I knew—we had passed through one on the way—but they had never come as a distinct new experience, they had been a part of the blurred unrealised world. But this one suddenly became an individual and its existence the cause for suppressed excitement; and to this day, I cannot enter it without recalling my childish sense of its immense significance.

Thus to be able to take the impact of physical facts against the naked imagination, to feel them bite and cling on, is the child's triumph. It is a short-lived triumph as a rule, for only too soon school comes and then, with the normal child, the power is broken. It does not fit well with a community life. Our private childish universe dissolves at the pressure of the commune. We lose the sense of a secret value in things which would make them

free of our dreamland. In its place we gain a sense of communal reality. We want to conform. We want to see things on the lines of tradition. We question their claims on our imagination. When school has done with us, we have to set about regaining some of our lost individuality, and by that time the childish faculty has so fallen into disuse that it can scarcely be said to function any more. And yet, occasionally as life goes on, something happens to recall it to activity. Some scene we pass through touches us in a particular manner, we do not know how or why, and the old power informs us once more. Questions and reflections and analyses are swept away, and for an hour we are children bearing the tablets that are to be written over with glamorous experience.

It was this that happened to two of us one August evening in Savoy during a walk from Chamonix to Sixt. We did not leave La Planpraz that morning until nine o'clock, and we spent an hour lounging on the top of the Brévent, waiting for the early mists, which were steaming upwards from the valley of Chamonix, to disperse so that we might get a farewell view of Mont Blanc and the dark raking aiguilles. It was our last day among the mountains, but our first for nearly three weeks among the snow-free hills; and we were in love with the novel and winsome pleasures of the earth below the snow to which we had descended. From the Brévent we dropped down by a long path into a glen packed with leafage, and rich and easeful to the eyes after much gazing on the white upper world. At midday we bathed in the eddying pool of a grey stream fed from unseen snows. The banks were

thick with Alpine rhododendrons and glowed softly with the rose hues of a Persian rug. We lay on smooth rocks which were bleached as cool in tone as aluminium, but were warm and delightful to touch. We let the sunshine soak through the pores of our uncovered bodies. In the heat of early afternoon we toiled up to our second pass along a track which threaded a tangled hillside of undergrowth and flowers; cranesbill and loosestrife and monks-hood and the big chocolate-coloured gentian. Below the lip of the pass, on an alp that glistened with the peeping eyes of little blue and yellow flowered plants and was fluent all day long with the noise of cowbells, we stopped at a canteen, as they call the tiny mountain inns of Savoy, and ate bread and cheese and drank deeply of new milk. New milk is admittedly bad liquor to walk on, and after the meal our pace slackened. We topped the pass at length and skirted a sea-green melancholy tarn with a limestone crag like an immense wall away on the left. Farther on, there was a basin of meadowland with two or three chalets, but no sign of a human being, only mule-tracks (which tempted us astray) leading away from the chalets. The mists came down thickly and blotted out all our landmarks and, thanks to an inadequate map, the gloomy light which made it almost impossible to read, and a flavour of carelessness, we spent an hour retrieving the direction from which the mule-tracks had lured us. In fact, during that wandering walk, we did everything that orthodox mountaineers, whose advance in the face of wayside temptation must be as steady as that of Bunyan's Christian, are aware that they must not do. Perhaps our unpilgrimlike conduct was a reaction from the time-table

which we had been keeping above the snowline, that rigorous time-table imposed by the sun who deals out penalties to the unpunctual mountaineer. Certainly there was a holiday atmosphere in the air. We were having a holiday within a holiday. I began the day with a secret sense of freedom akin to the feeling which used to elate me on the first day of my school holidays when I might be as late for breakfast as I chose and there was no bell to ring me at relentless pace through the duties of the morning. In like manner, on this first day below the snowline, we started late, thinking almost pityingly of the folk who had risen at two and three o'clock in the morning to win their peak, and we lazed and frivelled wherever the fancy took us, and overdrank fresh milk and kept no eyes on our watches, delighting all the while in the knowledge that our full measure of energy would never be needed and that no serious fate was likely to await the loiterer. There would be no need to tear ourselves from some delectable summit view because the sun would melt the surface of a snowslope and make it disagreeable for descent if we waited another hour, or, worse still, knock off the manacles sealed by night frost on avalanches and séracs and ice-bedded stones.

The upshot of liberty was that twilight came upon us as we crested our final rise and gazed down thousands of feet into the grey recesses of the gorge. Mist and cloud had drawn away from the hills leaving a wan evening. On the left, the flat-topped limestone crag appeared again with a red smudge of sunset above it. The precipices of its long flank were smooth and even. We stood on a spur dividing the gorge below us into two arms like

the arms of the letter Y. The left arm seemed to make a cleft between us and the crag. The point of the right arm struck to the heart of another group of mountains, a confusion of ghostly cliffs and slopes of sombre pine-trees. The stem of the Y was made by the far open valley where the villagers of Sixt and Samoens cultivate the crops and stock the meadows. Already the lamps of Samoens were twinkling up to us through the thin fog which still clung to the lower ground. They were like stars in an inverted heaven, and the space between us and them seemed as mysterious and remote as the reaches of the sky. We paused and gazed down and down. Grey light played on the pine-woods of the gorge and the patches of grass, making them hueless and strange and hushed. It seemed as if no one before us could ever have set eyes on this mystery hidden in the heart of the known mountains, no map foretold it. The entrance invited us and the exit was unknown. The gorge drew in our souls and steeped them in its shadowy life.

We made silently down the zigzags of the path which took us from the open hillside into the shades of the right-handed arm. It was a long descent, and with every downward zag the twilight deepened and the shadows became richer, until at length we were at the heart of darkness like deep grey velvet. And yet above us, on the hillside, day was still lingering with a pale look. We passed a tree which had been hit by lightning and it stood out from its dusky fellows, glittering and ghostly, shorn of its branches and plumed foliage. The influence of the place increased as a wave of music surging to its consummation. We crossed the torrent by a bridge of

pine-logs and came to a group of lighted chalets. Beyond, the gorge narrowed and our track ran close above the stream, plunging into loneliness once more. The dark grew more intense ; we saw the two walls, tall and steep and murky, inviting us to speculate how they would seem in the frank daylight. Where the pines grew thickly, we plunged into blots of brilliant darkness. They were full-toned and vibrant like great chords, utterly different from the flat night that one knows of ordinarily in a darkened room. We came into a space partly cleared of trees and saw the straight stems of four pines in a group struck by a gleam of half light and blanched to the colour of ashes. We caught a sudden glimpse through the trees of the waterfall in the left-hand ravine, white like a bared tusk. Peering up to the sky behind us, we saw the last of the reddish light high above the mountains. And then a star became visible hanging above the black wall to our right.

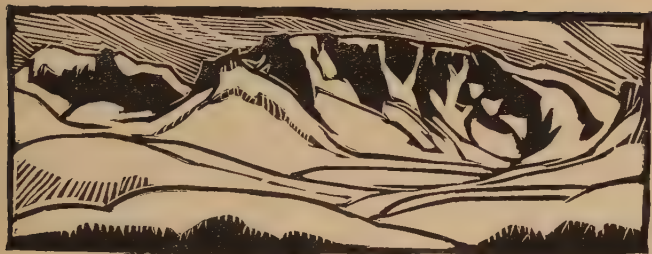
As we descended, emerging gradually into the open, the noises and smells of the valley stole upon our senses. The hard incessant whirr of the grasshoppers who drone of hot summer nights made a background to all we felt. Little movements of air brought us whiffs of perfume from the cut hay on the patches of meadow. There came a sudden scent of honey. Our last mile was in the open along the valley road. It was between ten and eleven o'clock. Then we found ourselves wandering through Sixt in the moonlight seeking an hotel. We were still half dazed by the influence of the gorge. Places do not often speak from their hearts and without reserve to grown-up people. There was the usual August

struggle for accommodation. Our landlady gave us supper, but all the beds were occupied. We might sleep, if we cared, in the hay-loft. She was almost abjectly apologetic. But a well-fitted hay-loft is luxury compared with the palliasse of an Alpine hut, and we made nests for ourselves and burrowed down gratefully. The doors of the loft were swung open high above the yard, and the night air came in and mingled with the smell of sweet dry grass. We drew the hay over us in great wisps for coverlets.

In the morning we strolled to a remarkable viewpoint called the *fer à cheval*, whence one sees five waterfalls tumbling over the rim of a huge mountain cirque shaped like a horseshoe. The five cascades pour down almost vertically for perhaps fifteen hundred or two thousand feet; and the amphitheatre is buttressed by craggy mountains, that on the left, the Pic de Tenneverges, eroded into bastions and pinnacles and a central keep like some medieval castle. We rested to gaze at the cirque on the fringe of a pine-wood beside a dried up tarn and, later, on a bank that smelled more richly of thyme warmed by the sun than any bank I have ever known. In the afternoon we had to walk in blazing heat along a dusty highroad to catch the train at Samoens. So we did not see our gorge again, never knew the outward look of its features, never tested whether its wonder would withstand the day.

I think we were right. If, seeking to know more, we had gone back, the adventure might have ended as in that old story of Cupid and Psyche. Night after night the lover came to Psyche in the enchanted palace, but she was

bound never to seek to discover the look of his face and form. All her senses knew him and had joy of his presence except her sight. And she was content, and trusted him until jealous sisters came and put terrible thoughts into her mind, urging and imploring her to look and make sure of his identity, for they told her that he was a poisonous serpent who came to her in this wise and that she must kill him. So, one night, tossed between love of her husband and fear of the monster, Psyche lighted a lamp and took a razor, and held the light above her husband's body so that she might at last see his features. Then she saw "the most meeke and sweetest beast of all beasts, even faire Cupid couched fairly, at whose sight the very lamp increased his light for joy and the razor turned his edge." Overcome with love and remorse, she fell to kissing the sleeping youth. But a drop of scalding oil from the lamp lipped over and fell on to Cupid's skin. And he awoke, and, seeing what had happened, spread his pinions and fled away without uttering a word.



SPRING IN THE CAIRNGORMS

TWENTY-SIX miles of going, and five of them across a plateau which twice breaks through the 4000-foot contour line and nowhere sags below a measure big enough to dwarf Snowdon ; six hours' continuous snow-work ; a couple of blizzards fit—as, indeed, they did—to flay the skin off one's face ; and in the lulls of blizzard and mist, the revealing of Titans, cloaked in snow and crowned on their brows with glittering cornices—is it too tame a prospectus for a Whit Monday mountain entertainment in the British Isles ?

In the opening paragraph of Guido Rey's *Matterhorn* there is a description, full of beauty and imagination, of the carving of a mountain from some great welt on the crust of the primeval world. The artist's work is done with elemental tools and he has a hundred hues for the colouring after he has shaped it. He fashioned the Cairngorms out of a formless mass of granite. Using acids, and water, and ice, he scored out their glens and corries to his pleasure, and made their cliffs and their broad backs to gleam with naked rock. In his conception of the finished work, one may fancy that he saw the valleys of the Spey and the Dee, to north and

south, broadening out from the mountain bases. And, lest the farmers and foresters who cultivated the valley woods and fields should be cut off from each other by the formidable mass he was shaping into beauty, he cleft it from end to end by the pass of the Larig Ghru. Westwards, he belted the mountains in a wide semicircle with a couple of masterful burns, and eastwards he tumbled a highland wilderness between them and their two big comrades, Ben Avon and Beinn a Bhuird. Finally, he richly coloured their flanks with heather.

The steep walls of the Larig support no fewer than seven defined summits which can muster over four thousand feet apiece ; five to the west and two to the east, frowning at each other across the cleavage. It is as if the mountains had once played a Brobdingnagian game of " nuts in May " and the westerners had come off best. But the combined efforts of Cairn Toul and the Angel's Peak and Braeriach, the stalwarts of the western team, could not haul over in the deciding tug-of-war, Cairngorm, who has lent his name to the whole group, or Ben MacDhui, who is runner-up for the greatest height in the British Isles.

A mountain apprenticeship in Cumberland and Carnarvonshire is apt to leave a person with casual notions about height and distance. Welsh and English standards need somewhat stiffening up before setting one's courses to the Cairngorms. The Snowdon Horseshoe, as everyone knows, is the official between-lunch-and-dinner walk after a wet morning at Pen-y-Pass. One can imagine Ben MacDhui and Cairn Toul grinning at each other across the Larig at the very idea of such cavalier behaviour with them. A lost direction in the cloud on Eskhause

may land a man in Eskdale instead of Wasdale, but this, though irritating, is hardly serious. For there is the inn, and tea with eggs and bacon ; and when annoyance has melted away in the expansive contentment of the well-filled, there is the track homeward across Burnmoor. But the unfortunate who misses his line badly in the Cairngorms will find himself as likely as not locked up in a maze of cliffs, or, if he does hit a valley, he may have to follow it for ten or fifteen miles before he comes on any habitation of man. It will then, most probably, be cheerfully borne in upon him that, somehow or another, he has had the points of the compass hopelessly shuffled up and that a nine hours' tramp across stark hills separates him from his base. For it is twenty-five miles by the Larig track from Inverey in the Dee valley to Aviemore in the Spey valley, and these villages are the nearest, indeed the only, bases for the hills unless the weather invites one to sleep at the famous shelter stone beside Loch Avon or in some uninhabited bothy. Thrust away in the glens, there may be one or two cabins where foresters and game-keepers live, but the walker is not likely to get a welcome from them, for the iron hand of the deer-stalker and the grouse-shooter might lie heavy upon them if they played the good Samaritan to wanderers on the hills. Between the snow-bound, practically night-bound, winter of the Highlands and summer largely sacrificed to the " sportsman " there is very little season left for the walker to go on his occasions content that he will not be held up or even " inadvertently " shot if he strays from the ordered road. His feet are not considered in the least beautiful upon the mountains.

In the abstract, these factors are plainly set forth by the map-makers. For even on the Ordnance Survey of Scotland, with its prodigal display of contour shading, the wash of brown, so broad and deep, which marks the Cairngorm group holds one's attention at a first glance. A closer examination supports the first impression that here are lordly fellows who will demand from one a certain measure of respect. At any rate, so it seemed to three mountaineers, of very modest merit and experience, who were discussing ways and means in the morning train from Blair Atholl to Aviemore with the map spread out on their knees and the usual wordy wrangle in progress. Derelict patches of snow clung obstinately to a mushy existence on the slopes of Drumochter Pass. Mufflers of cloud were swathed round the higher mountains. Yet the Optimist, sublimely disregarding of the unpleasing look of the weather, was of opinion that no one but a thorough-paced slacker would shy at the great high-level walk from Braeriach to Cairn Toul. The Pessimist marshalled, with quiet assurance, a dozen depressing arguments. The Trimmer said : " Well, at any rate, we can have a damn good try." And sudden rain spattered on the window-panes.

In the upshot, there was a labouring through heavy snow to the Einich Cairn, one of the swellings on the league-long tableland which rise above the 4000-foot line. Below us, as we trudged cloudwards, sulked Loch Einich, an iron-grey, lustreless surface, with the precipices of Sgoran Dubh Mor raking up from the farther strand. Wandering vapours brushed the white crest of the cliffs and the gullies were plastered with snow. The black

rock had a tarry gleam. We breasted the blunt lip of our own ridge and were received all at once into a world that flowed whitely about us and enclosed us in itself. The tableland must have been a virgin snowfield, but the mist was far too dense to see farther than three or four yards. It was like standing inside a great hollowed ball of whiteness. We crouched beside the cairn, shivering at the caresses of the wind and keeping eager watch for any threadbare appearance that might suggest an early rent in the thick garment of cloud. But the garment had no threadbare places, and the Optimist, who would have liked to adventure deeper into the white mystery, was outvoted.

Life, however, can generally strike a nice balance of compensations. The long tramp home down Glen Einich and through Rothiemurchus Forest almost made up for the uncaptured summits. Ahead was unfolded to us a pageant of lavish purples and greens and chocolate-reds ; and behind us the implacable mountains, got up so paradoxically in the symbolism of brides, brooded remotely, their slopes shining to patches of sunlight. Presently our moorland track made into the woods. The pillars of the fir-trees were dusky rose in colour and between them distant hills to the westward glowed like amethysts. There was a scent of resin in the air.

Next day, we saw for the first time, below lifting clouds, the top of Cairngorm and the rampart of the precipice which makes the escarpment of Cairn Lochan. We were lazing by the shores of Loch Morlich, munching sandwiches and making the most of Whit Sunday's thin

ration of sunshine. The clouds melted and lifted very deliberately, and we watched with impatience for the unveiling of the tops. Cairngorm was perfectly white, and he had the faintest gleam of sun upon his snowfields. The smashed face and scalped summit of Braeriach were still hidden from us. Eddies of mist floated in the great corrie below Cairn Lochan. And at our feet the lake rippled, washing a shore of sand, stuff that had been gritted and borne down by the wear and tear of time from the granite of the hills. Scotch firs had their roots in this inland beach, and the pinkish bark of their trunks made beautiful harmonies with the tawny sand. A mile or so away, across the valley where the birches were hardly showing green, slopes of chocolate-coloured heather rolled upwards to the snow-line.

We had tried the western half of the group and been repulsed. For honour's sake the eastern peaks would have to be won at any cost. Those clear summits had a siren way with them, and we were almost persuaded to hitch on our rucksacks and make a helter-skelter dash for them without more ado. But Sunday morning had found us late breakfasters and the day was already half gone. We resisted the sirens, cursed Morpheus for the ill trick he had played us, and in the morning bestirred ourselves early.

The ascent of Cairngorm and Ben Macdhui sounds a quite modest undertaking, but, in fact, it means a thirty-four-mile round from Aviemore—that is unless one forgoes pride and gratefully takes a lift in a Ford car to Loch Morlich. This saves the eight-mile walk through Glen Mor Forest to the foothills of Cairngorm, and

therefore reduces the mileage to a reasonable twenty-six. As there were no Lake District record-breakers staying in our inn, we had not the least compunction about the Ford!

It was a gambler's morning from a weather point of view, but we made steady tracks upward. Scores of little burns of melted snow combed the shaggy foothills that stick out like tentacles from the main mass of mountains. We started a grouse, nearly stepping on her nest in the heather, and beyond us, by the snow, ptarmigan wheeled, still wearing their white winter plumage. Driving clouds made delicate shadows that flitted across the white shoulders of Cairngorm. Waifs of mist had again lost their way in the Cairn Lochan recess. And we observed, with respect for our mountains, how the gale whipped up the snow like flying scud from the verge of the Cairn Lochan cliffs.

Later, we caught the storm full blast as we were slanting down from Cairngorm for the magnificent plateau walk over Cairn Lochan to Ben Macdhui. The wind seized the particles of frozen snow crust and lashed them into one's face like a cat-o'-nine-tails. In a second the furious mixture of snow and racing cloud had cut us off from everything but its own unstable world. It was an immensely exhilarating devil's dance, and the gale made the figures for us, pushing us willy-nilly into our places. Our sense of direction was utterly bewildered. At last, backs to the wind, legs astride and heels dug deep into the snow, we tried to stand square long enough to take a compass bearing. We had lurched away almost at right angles to our true course, but the bearing put us

straight again for Cairn Lochan. As we approached the edge of the precipice the mists parted and the wind subsided, like a child who has tired himself out with a storm of crying and becomes all at once still. The sudden vision of cliff and cornice, so quiet and unperturbed, made one silent. The rock faces were black as pitch and smeared with pearly snow and so deep and sheer that their foundations were hidden from us. The cornice was sliced into teeth along the line of the crest. A strange feeling, born of the sudden quiet and solitude, slid into one's mind. The place seemed withdrawn from the comradeship of human beings. One had the sense of having lifted a curtain and come unawares upon a secret beauty of the earth.

It is written somewhere that Cézanne, after he had painted a picture, would often go away and leave the canvas behind him to lie unwanted on the ground. His ardent mind, always striving to find a more perfect means of expression, became indifferent to anything he had made after he had done working on it. He had apparently no desire for popular applause, nor any feeling for the value of his pictures except as experiments. For this reason, many of his paintings have perished or been destroyed and are lost to the world for ever. May one fancy that, in something of the same spirit of superb carelessness, the artist of the earth carved this detail of mountain sculpture and then passed silently onward, perhaps to paint the lonely sunrise over an undiscovered tract of tropical America or to cast the wonders of light upon the waves of an uncharted sea? But what if some obscure mountaineer should come by chance upon the deserted

masterpiece and feel his own soul gleam to a reflection of the artist's joy ?

There is a little tarn on the tableland half-way between Cairn Lochan and Ben Macdhuì. It feeds the March burn which finds a quick course to the Larig down a slope made rough with screeshoots. So the map told us. But we saw neither tarn nor stream. There was no break at all in the sheeted whiteness of the plateau and the hillside. And we wanted the water for a landmark. For it was our plan, after labouring on to the top of Macdhuì, to retrace our steps and make the burn our line of descent. Luckily, a clear spell gave us time to settle where the tarn and the head of the burn ought to be ; and we staggered about in the snow and made a great churning up which ended in a track of footmarks to point the direction for our future going. There was method in this drunken behaviour. If the mists were down on our return we had a notion that we should never strike the invisible course of the burn, and a miscalculation might very well land us in unpleasant argument with some crag too stiff for us to tackle. It was the Trimmer's idea, and in the event we blessed his foresight.

Across the great fracture of the Larig the western peaks appeared in silvery magnificence. They showed a good deal of vicious rock gashing the snow on their precipitous faces. Loch Uaine, which is set like a gem in the southern recess of the mighty Garbh corrie, was buried in drift. The recess was hollowed in a curve of beauty and grandeur that almost took one's breath away.

We tramped on, and once more our horizon was squeezed into a few yards' radius.

On the top of Macdhui the weather showed us an unexpected consideration. For three whole minutes the mists left us alone. But there was no distant view westwards to Ben Nevis, and it was too cold to argue as to which summits were which of the hills nearer at hand. We snuggled down as well as we could in the lee of the cairn, and the Optimist, with thoughtless abandon, began stuffing raisins and nuts into a greedy mouth before attending to a wonderful southward vision. It was a pity. The three minutes were up and a new hurricane was prepared before the last raisin had gone to placate the clamorous lions in the Optimist's interior. But even as the tempest hovered for its swoop the Optimist had one swift sight across rolling snowfields of Lochnagar and Ben-y-Gloe. And they shone with a translucent blue like the colour on the breasts of doves.

Colour is the fairy godmother's cloak of mountains. One thinks of the evening after-glow of the far north mantling the Romsdalthorn—

Then from the west there streamed a flood of light
That bathed in glowing purple all the vast
Rock circle ranged around us. . . .

or of waiting on a hillock above the little cemetery at Arezzo to watch beyond the cypresses and the ancient cornland a summer sundown stealing over the heated flanks of the Apennines in soft purples and crimsons and cool greys. But these were never more lovely than the magic which light and atmosphere can make in Scotland. Scottish hillsides glow and glimmer in the distance and the half-distance like lit gems. The snowy hills or the

very distant ones are pearls and moonstones ; the others are rubies and sapphires and amethysts.

The storm, itching maliciously to let off a volley of sleet against someone's unoffending body, roared its discharge across the mountain. Our coats and breeches were turned into a crystal armour by the pelting, half-frozen snow. The stuff beat into our eyes so that it was scarcely possible to keep them open. The tracks of our ascent—footmarks at least eight inches deep—were filled up in five minutes with the fresh snow so that we often lost them and had to halt and search about before we could distinguish their traces. Our knee muscles were getting tired. There is no experience of mountaineering so wearisome as a prolonged ploughing through snow where the crust is too thin to bear one's weight and one is constantly sinking up to ankles and knees.

Even under the tamest weather conditions the Larig must appear a wild place. Its name means in Gaelic the " gloomy " pass. On the east it is walled by scree-shoots and precipices ; on the west, like some system of fortifications built by giants, cliffs and corries tower upwards in chaotic terraces to hold the tableland which makes a platform for the western peaks. The floor has been used as a dumping ground for the mountain lumber of centuries, and the track pushes its way between a debris of boulders and broken humps of moraine left by the long-perished glacier. For our benefit, the Larig put on its most uncompromising expression. We descended to its chilly depths down a steep and rotten snowslope which looked and felt as if it might avalanche at any minute. The pass was silted up with snowdrifts

and the track mostly invisible. Mist licked round the huge bastion of Cairn Toul which they call the Devil's Point. We looked back to its black and steaming rocks and thought the name not inapt. Armies of swollen clouds came glowering from the northward. All day their ranks had never been short of recruits. As soon as one wave of the attack dashed itself to death against the crags another loomed into view ready to take its place.

We were beginning to think we had had enough. We felt very hungry and even cross. The Trimmer relieved his feelings by pointing out to the Pessimist, a little acidly, that a sprained ankle would not be a popular addition to our adventures. Our path was littered with loose and wobbly stones, deceitfully covered with snow, and the Pessimist had an ankle of evil fame. The Optimist was silent. Another mile or two—once off the snow and on to the heather—and the Optimist would be banqueting in heaven. Was not a feast of cheese sandwiches and bannocks spread with jam prepared even now for the faithful in the rucksacks which they themselves carried? Does not every man bear his heaven in his own heart?

We put an ice-axe to menial use by digging with it a little hole in the peaty ground to hold a spirit-lamp and saucepan. All the long day through we had carried that spirit-lamp and saucepan, and in the coldest moments of snow and mist we had cheered ourselves with the thought of the Oxo we should brew. Probably the most exquisite descriptions in the world of food are those worked with such an obvious, if delicate, smacking of the lips on the part of the story-teller into the tales of the *Thousand and*

One Nights. Even a medieval ascetic must have fallen to the sweetmeats, and sherbets, and sugared, rose-flavoured waters of the pastrycooks of Baghdad. And yet I am firmly convinced that not even Haroun al-Raschid himself ever had his palate tickled half so pleasantly as did we three wet and hungry tramps squatting in a boggy patch of heather and wolfing our messy sandwiches between draughts of Oxo which had a fine tang of the earth. The earthy taste was obtained by stirring the pot with a root of heather. It is a recipe to remember. We hit upon the formula for mixing an elixir of life. At any rate, after tossing off the Oxo we forgot our battering and labour upon the tops and the seventeen miles that lay behind us and raced like colts fresh from the stable, over the nine that separated us from home and more food.

The swinging walk down the pass, and then through the pine groves and green clearings of Rothiemurchus, made a worthy finish to our ten hours of great life. That night one tumbled into bed the grateful possessor of new treasure—golden warp for the weaving of the memories that go to enrich the leaner days :

Strife that was friendly, and work that was willing,
Mountains attempted and muddled and won ;
War without enemies, sport without killing ;
How will it seem to you forty years on ?



FLATLAND

I AM by tradition and bent a lover of mountains. When I hear a person say that he dislikes, for example, the scenery of Switzerland and finds pleasure in that of Holland, I cannot suppress an impulse of horror. It is a denial of the accepted gods and my faith receives a shock. I comfort myself with the reflection that probably the remark is made largely for effect and the speaker, like a good many other free-thinkers, not nearly so atheistical as he would like to appear. And yet . . . a tiny seed of doubt has been sown in my mind. I begin to ask myself questions. For I have to admit that we mountaineers are very prejudiced people. We regard the man who would sooner look out across a plain than up at a mountain with the terror and distrust of the late Senator Bryan for an exponent of Darwinism. We are perfectly sincere about it. Allow the wicked fellow his say unchecked and in time he will bring down in ruin on our heads the whole system of nature-worship which we have so carefully built up. Faith has little faith in its own endurance, shrinking from the cold breath of

inquiry like a hothouse plant. The priesthoods that we organised to defend our dogmas will shrivel away, frost-bitten to death. Already heresy is active and the taint is spreading even to the sacred ranks of the priests. It was reported a little time ago that an otherwise reputable member of a famous climbing club brought a bag of golf clubs to Wasdale Head at Whitweek. Golf clubs and ice-axes shared the umbrella-stand together :

“The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid ; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together.”

O bitter consummation for all champions of exclusive creeds !

No tarnish of disloyalty to the mountains can possibly cling to the name of Leslie Stephen, but even he felt some regard for the Fen country and the flats of Holland. And that is encouraging to one who, like myself, unashamedly and unreservedly enjoys scenes which conscience says no true-blue mountaineer ought to tolerate. I like the banks of the River Thames ; and apple-orchards in blossom or when the fruit is ripe and the trees bearing so profusely that the whole orchard glows red. I like parkland—broads of deep and rich green lying round a great house. I like forest trees, oak and ash and beech and elm and lime. But I am deeper dyed in heresy than this. I suppose that in the picture gallery of memory every man has an inner cabinet, locked from curious eyes, where he keeps his choicest treasures. In my inner cabinet, companion of the half-dozen memories of scenery that I exalt above all others, I keep one picture of the lowlands. Colour provides a

more satisfying feast than form for some people in moods of emotional and mental hunger. And there are two colours in nature more sumptuous than any others. The one is an indigo and purple dye which floods the sea—the “wine-dark” sea of the Greeks, I suppose—in certain effects of light. The other is the colour of standing corn. I have never seen them coupled. My picture is of the second. Imagine a house on the blunt edge of a Chiltern hillside mottled with chalk and dotted with juniper bushes. From the windows you can look out for thirty and forty miles over a great arc of country. Somewhere in the valley the Thames flows, leisurely and noiseless and sinuous. Beyond are low downs undulating into the distance like a long sea swell. It is evening and a week or two before harvest, and all that country is corn country; from Chilterns to Cotswolds, a cloth of tawny gold, patterned with dusky trees and hedgerows and fringed with blue of the far horizon. You gazed and gazed, thirstily drinking it in, and the colour flowed through every channel of the mind fulfilling with strength and rich contentment. De Wint might have fixed part of its magic in a painting. He understood that noble colour harmony of twilight green and tanned orange. But Turner alone of English painters, strung up to the mood in which he painted “Richmond Hill,” could have sublimated the prospect completely, combining its splendour of colour with those long distances and great breadths, the royal spacing of earth and sky.

There is one beauty of the mountains and another which belongs to the plains. Surely it is not trying to

serve both God and Mammon to want them both. Turner, at any rate, did so. To experience the charm of the plains, you must accept their economy of effort. A hayrick or a clump of trees takes the place of a mountain in more lavish lands. In Cumberland the scene is knit and dominated by the complicated rhythm of huge masses of rock and earth, but in Cambridgeshire a single church steeple is a key to the design of the landscape. You must delight also in great spaces empty of everything but atmosphere and sunlight. The arch of heaven fills so much of the vision that it has an importance in shaping the character of any prospect which it can never assume in a mountain country. I do not think, for instance, that any hillman can have quite the same feeling for the magnificent procession of clouds as the dweller on the plains. To the mountaineer clouds as a rule betoken a chequered day in which at any moment the prospect may be limited to dense blankets of fog on every side. But to the plainsman they make a marvellous series of scenes in blue and white of which he is the privileged spectator. They are the shifting frescoes of the sky. An invitation to search infinity streams from them as one after another they float out of sight. He has another advantage over the mountaineer when he wishes to contemplate the heavens at night. Unless you are on the summit of the highest mountain of a range, an unenviable position during the cold hours of darkness, you are never able to see the complete dome of the sky down to the circular horizon line. But on the centre of a broad plain, as on the deck of a ship, there are no unevennesses on the surface of the globe to

encumber your vision. While the planet spins round on its diurnal rotation, you can watch a million stars slip past and conceive them as fireflies flitting across the naked sky.

Comparisons are said to be invidious, why it is difficult to surmise, for they are the most fascinating method we have for deepening our appreciations of persons and things. Let us then try and compare two justly famous views of flat and mountain land. In Pater's unfinished romance of *Gaston de la Tour*, there is a description of the cathedral of Chartres seen from a distance across the plain of La Beauce. The cornland of Central France appealed to Gaston's imagination as a sea surrounding the tall cathedral. "Like a ship for ever a-sail in the distance, everywhere the great church of Chartres was visible with the passing light or shadow upon its grey weather-beaten surfaces." It is a prospect revealed to any traveller who approaches Chartres by the Paris road. Recall it, and then set beside it in your mind a first sight of the Matterhorn after coming out from England. When I was last at Zermatt, we arrived in a thick raw rain which obscured even the sides of the valley. We dined, and during dinner the miracle happened. At nine o'clock we strolled out into a night of clear moonlight and crystal cold with frost from the heights; up through the village, along the Z'mutthal path, and then suddenly round that spur of hillside which hides the great mountain from Zermatt. If you have had a rainy journey all the way from England and no sight of the Oberland mountains from the uplands above Lausanne,

no view of the Dent du Midi with its snowfields shining reflected in the lake of Geneva, then mind and eye will be totally unprepared for the sublime kaleidoscope. In a flash, your vision of London in August, tired and dun, disappears, extinguished by that soaring form of white framed by the velvet-shadowed slopes of the valley. You know something of what those Eastern peasants felt in the story of the Transfiguration. The twin spires of Chartres and the single blade of the Matterhorn have this in common. They are alone in the world ; in their setting they have no peers. And each is supremely dramatic. But here the resemblance ends, and it would be hard to find any two scenes which kindle the imagination of mankind in more diverse fashion. The cathedral towers of Chartres have been for a thousand years as a beacon to the beneficent thoughts of men. You can hardly conceive a condition of life in which they should leave the imagination quite cold. A ship sailing in the distance is but one of many images. To the voyager, making his way over the vast plain, they symbolise welcome and rest and fellowship. They signify the contentment of his homing instincts. And the desire for home is perhaps the deepest and most cherished feeling in a man's heart. "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests ; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." Is there another cry in history that cuts us to the heart like that bitter little phrase ?

The Matterhorn, on the other hand, satisfies no yearning for home. The time is not long past when the great

snowfields and rock ramparts of the Alps inspired nothing but terror and superstitious awe :

With midnight startings, crying out, O ! O !
Nurse, O ! my love is slain : I saw him go
O'er the white Alps alone. . . .

To-day, they are exciting and a challenge to battle. You can imagine that curious small cloud that clings so often to the summit of the Matterhorn as a description of Gessler's cap—a splendid insult to the sovereignty of man on earth. We accept the challenge and we conquer the tyrant, but when all is said and done, we can never possess the land. So soon as the crested citadel is ours, we must sound the retreat. We are sojourners like our fathers, and before we have had time even to scan our fill of the promised country, the exigencies of the weather will drive us down.

It is not inconceivable that the view of Chartres may outlast the Matterhorn in the admiration of mankind. We may never repeople the mountains with the demons feared by the old Swiss and Italian peasants, yet in some future cycle of time, wearier or more obtuse and slavish than the present, mankind may gaze on them unmoved, refusing to be fired for a conquest that seems barren of obvious and tangible good. Even a sensitive person like Ruskin ridiculed mountaineering as a climbing of soaped poles ; and who knows but that our dim descendants may share his indolent mood when he avers that while sauntering over the passage of the Jura by Olten and picking wild-flowers, a man could get “ diviner aspects of the distant Alps than ever were achieved by toil of limb or won by risk of life.”

Surely, surely slumber is more sweet than toil, the shore
Than labour in the deep mid-ocean, wind and wave and
oar ;

O rest ye, brother mariners, we will not wander more.

It is amusing, incidentally, to think of Ruskin as a lotus-eater.

Physiologists tell us that the human embryo in its mother's body goes through in miniature that long evolution which finally resulted in man. In similar fashion, the life of the normal child is a true mirror of the progress of the race, striving through the ages to gain an ever more secure foothold on the earth. He spends his energies in climbing trees and damming streams, delving for himself with difficulty in the ground until he has made a pit that is a dwelling-place to which he may withdraw and be in safety. He adventures along the banks of a brook or up a hillside and discovers new continents. He cultivates a little garden and uses a large slice of the space for the growing of vegetables and to the exclusion of flowers. For blunt instinct says that a food supply is a first condition of existence and that beauty follows after. The child, if he be lucky, carries these impulses unvitiated past his schooldays and into his manhood. And then—on a summer morning, he weighs anchor at Plymouth and sails his own boat across the Irish sea ; or you find him celebrating New Year's Day on the Pillar Rock, cold and coated with frozen sleet, absorbed in the subjugation of some quite arbitrary rock-climb.

Herein lies the best hope for the survival of the pastime of mountaineering. We climb mountains, not as Mr.

C. E. Montague suggests, because "we want an easy one after so many twisters," but driven by the same high impulse that sent Columbus across the Atlantic and prompted Galileo to study the courses of the planets. It is part of the craving to understand, to be partners in the secret conduct of the enterprise of nature. And if the Flatlanders should rudely inquire how it is that this impulse seldom drove men to the mountains before, say, 1800, we might suggest that the rise of mountaineering coincided with a series of successes in our struggle with nature unexampled, perhaps, since man exchanged flint for bronze. These victories released a vast supply of energy. And there stood the mountains, flaunting us to our faces and as yet unassailed. The conclusion was inevitable. For, ever since nature brought off the lock-out from Eden, we have been striving by one means or another to regain our lost prestige. And every rock-climb that yields to muscle and skill and forethought, each passage of a crevassed glacier or an iced slope which depends on craftsmanship and long observation of the way of the weather with snow, adds something to the list of our successes in that æon-long war. The pioneer climbers of the nineteenth century are no unworthy comrades of Stephenson and Faraday and Lord Kelvin.

There is, however, another facet to this stone. Mountaineers cannot have it all their own way. Our racial memory of the deadlier passages in that war is still so vivid that we are not invariably anxious to cross swords with nature in our play. Sometimes we do feel the need of an easy one after so many twisters. But then we forsake the mountains and turn to the plains,

for they have been humanised and are gentle; they suggest peace and pursue it; and they minister to a deep-rooted and primitive desire to be assured that we are members of a stable world. In the Jewish version of the Flood it is the goal towards which the whole of that elaborate story is directed. You can feel, as you read, the desire unconsciously at work, moulding and pressing the shape of the story until it has achieved fulfilment. For how can life be maintained without some assurance of continuity? Will a man take thought and sweat to till his field when his labour is at the mercy of the arbitrary fiat of an autocratic deity?

While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease.

"Security of tenure" was not invented by Liberal politicians of the nineteenth century. The first recorded Land Act is that covenant of the rainbow between Jehovah and the prehistoric Jews.

You can follow this desire and expectation of continuity through fascinating by-ways of speculation. Obviously, where thought is logical it must be the keystone of the arch. Unless we can be sure that a given group of causes will invariably produce the same effect, reasoning is at an end. It governs melody, for is it not the cause why one sequence of notes sounds right and another wrong? It is at work in our response to a rhythm. Perhaps it may be the reason for the special pleasure which primitive peoples seem to take in formal and repetitive decoration. They know less of

natural law than we do and find nature more capricious and unaccountable. Their craving for continuity is therefore more acute, and they express it whenever they have to decorate their buildings or objects of household use. And at the opposite extreme, it is sorely tempting to refer, for example, the conspicuous absence of rhythmic or decorative design in things typically Victorian to the exuberant and optimistic belief, which seems to have prevailed among the English of the Golden Victorian age, that man was winning the great battle against nature all along the line.

This had been a digression. Returning to our flocks, it seems that a lowland landscape satisfies the continuity craving very much better than a highland one. The everlasting hills stress their endurance at our expense. In certain moods, they depress us with a sense of our mutability. We men are outside the scheme of continuity to which they belong. But we are not outside the scheme to which seedtime and harvest belong. And when we contemplate that immemorial cycle, made manifest in the long furrows of winter ploughland, or the hay smell of a June meadow, we experience once more the relief and re-established tranquillity of Noah when he saw Jehovah's bow stretched across the heavens.

Mountainland is savage and flatland is tamed—a contemptuous antithesis often hurled at the lowlands by a mountaineer. But why should we despise tamed country. We do not despise domestic animals or garden flowers or applied electricity. I cannot imagine a man refusing to have his room lit by electric light because it was no longer in the wild state of lightning. Perhaps the con-

tempt is a legacy of the reaction from eighteenth-century classicism of those same exuberant Victorians. They were not in the mood for gentle scenery. How they must have enjoyed, for instance, T. L. Peacock's gibe at Mr. Marmaduke Milestone, a guest at Headlong Hall and a "landscape gardener of the first celebrity." It will be recalled how Mr. Milestone "promised himself a signal triumph for his incomparable art in the difficult and therefore glorious achievement of polishing and trimming the rocks of Llanberis." The antithesis, however, does suggest one fundamental difference between flat and highland scenery. Flatland is man's country, and the eye therefore requires the work of man to take a prominent place in the landscape. It is only in an agricultural district, for instance, that the house reaches its finest expression. The stately homes of England may sometimes offend the more democratically minded of us politically, but they seldom fail to please our eyes. There is something singularly comforting and gracious in the prospect of a great house surrounded by its parkland and pleasantly lording it over the countryside. It looks so never-to-be-ruffled and permanent, fitted to withstand the corroding waves of centuries. It is a symbol of success, the success of the race in making an enduring home for itself upon the earth. True, that its looks belie it and that in most cases it would be more correct to regard it as an emblem of decay. But we men are tenacious of our symbols. It is the difficulty with our religions. We shall no doubt loyally continue to have these feelings of reverence and protection in the presence of the country house—in the presence of the great manor houses of Cheshire, for

instance, even though we know that they are ghosts and that the power they once represented would be far more fittingly symbolised by a street of banks in Manchester. In cities, the house is subordinate to space ; it is one of a thousand close packed and should keep its personality in harmony with the general scheme like a soldier in a regiment. The most agreeable streets or squares are those in which a series of buildings unite in one decorative design, as they did in Nash's Regent Street, and as they still do to some extent in Kensington Square. In the mountains, the house is subordinate to nature. A house on a hill ought to be hid. At least it must be so matched with its environment that it becomes as it were an integral part, merging into it as rock merges into heather or upland grass. In this respect, Swiss chalets, the farms of Cumberland, and the rock villages of the Riviera are perfectly planned. In winter, the chalet, with its back against the hillside and its roof covered with snow, is indistinguishable until you come close to it. This is the simplest harmony. A Lakeland farm represents a more complex kind. Observe the group of Wasdale Head from the summit of Great Gable. The houses are visible from a distance, but they do not insist on their presence. The shapes are too simple to plead for attention. The colours—grey blue of slate and whitewash—echo the rocks on Scafell and the leaden surface of the lake, the white streaks of swollen cascades. Subtler yet are the harmonies of the Riviera rock village which disdains the shelter of valleys and holds manfully to the blunt crests of the hills. A day's walk into the hinterland of Mentone or Bordighera or San Remo and

you are among the seaward Alps. Nobody goes there. Energetic winter migrants play golf or tennis, the sedentary never take up their chairs and walk. The foothills are cultivated in terraces with a patience and an obstinate refusal to lose a yard of possible soil which would seem incredible to an English farmer. You can watch the peasants at work in their faded blue blouses and creamy-hued trousers. In the valleys olive-trees glint grey in the sunshine. Here and there a cypress stands out against the light background. There are pine woods to pass through, and steep-sided glens through which it is hard to push a way. You emerge from such a glen, perhaps, and suddenly there flashes into view a small town clinging far above you to the summit of a hill. Its foundations merge imperceptibly into the rock and earth of the hillside. The plastered houses are coloured pink or buff or dark rusty red. But the plaster weathers to such a multitude of hues that each fuses with the other and the total effect unites with the yellowish brown of distant rocks and the greens and greys nearer at hand. The houses group themselves in a conical cluster, spotted with red patches of roof tiles. They crown the mountain, giving it a quality of queenly graciousness. You feel that they are the appropriate and inevitable climax of its upward curves. A cobbled mule-track zigzags up the hillside to the walls. You ascend and find the track so narrow that a mule swinging down with a load of brushwood pushes you clean off the path. The muleteer is a black-headed, beady-eyed lad with a soft tan brown skin. Inside the town, you wander through a warren of steep and narrow alleys and lose

the sunlight. Overhead, spanning the roadways, arches lock the walls together to strengthen them against the shock of an earthquake. The houses have queer cave-like holes on the street level. But in the square, and every village finds flat ground somewhere sufficient for its piazza, the ground is bright and dusty ; and overhead is the sky of countries south of the Alps, deeper and brighter than speedwell blue and hard as steel. Looking down the length of a straight alley you may catch a vista of distant mountains smeared with snow, framed like the pictures in a peep-show.

There is one kind of scenery where mountain and plain combine together with glorious effect. If you cross the Lombard plain from Milan to Lake Maggiore, you will traverse, taken by itself, one of the dullest stretches of country in Europe. And yet, on a clear day, I would not exchange that train journey for any that I have travelled. Beyond the rank green levels, miles away to the north, the giant wall of the Alps stands white and jagged, far-flung across Italy. All the careful transition of nature is lost by the hard line of the rim of the earth. There are no foothills. The interminable green flats lick right up to the shoulders of the mountains like a rising tide. It is an epic view. And at sundown the crude green of the plain becomes soft and brooding, the horizontal light gleams on a window-glass, a pond, a sluggish stream and turns it to red-hot metal. In the distance the mountains glow like alabaster set before a great flame.

The hills are never more alluring than when we lift up our eyes to them from a plain. And, conversely, there is a spell laid on the levels when we see them from a height

—the ancient spell which stirs our imagination when we read the story of how Moses climbed Mount Nebo so that he might gaze upon the plain of Canaan. In England this converse view is happily not a rare one; you need not climb very high to win its full perfection. Indeed, English scenery seems to be specially well adapted for it. The reader will have divined, for instance, that it was the foundation of that view over the Thames valley described a few pages back. You get it from the outlying hills of the Lake District looking northward to Carlisle. You get it from the westerly spurs of the Pennines looking over Cheshire and south-west Lancashire. But in order to realise the full strength of mystery in such a view you must live with it for years and find out that however much you increase your knowledge you will never be able to account for its numberless moods. For twenty years it was my fortune to live thus overlooking the plain of Cheshire. From the western windows of our house you saw straight over the tops of trees and two church spires to a vast level of pastureland, fading away into blue atmosphere near the estuary of the Dee. There was nothing but the curl of the earth over the horizon line to prevent your vision reaching with powerful glasses to Slieve Donard and the mountains of Mourne in Ireland, a hundred and seventy miles away. In the south-west, you could often distinguish the hills of Wales, and on a clear day to the north Rivington Pike appeared delicate and stately above the smoke of Lancashire. In moods of brooding storm, or when the rains had just passed, these distant landmarks became preternaturally clear, and the middle distance grew brilliant instead of soft and hazy.

Hills came into view that were normally hidden in haze, or seemed to lift themselves from the surface of the plain where before they had been lying as it were stretched out asleep and indistinguishable from the surrounding flats. Here and there a distant group of factory chimneys stood up like dark pencils, and you could see the indigo wreaths of smoke twisting up into the air. In summer time the sun dropped over the rim of the plain so that the final rays streamed into our western rooms. And in autumn, as we sat at tea in the window, we used to watch tribes of rooks flying steadily across the sky, seemingly on a level with our heads. We marvelled at their unerring punctuality—they were never late, and they never missed a day—but we never found out whence they came and whither they were bound. Now, when I shut my eyes, I can conjure up the vision of the plain as vividly as if I were sitting at that window looking out over the dip of the lawn and the beech-trees at the foot of the garden. It is woven into all my imaginations as the scenery that one lived with in childhood must be. I think of it as warp set out on a loom ready to hold and bind the thousand different threads of weft which are flashed across it by the years.

Perched aloft there, you never felt completely a part of the life proceeding on the plain. It seemed sometimes almost to have the unreality of a reflection in a mirror. You descended, of course, and mingled with it, but always climbed back in the evening to the house on the hill, and became like a lighthouseman gazing out over the sea. At night there would be sometimes a wizard red glow over the southern sky; it almost hurt to realise that it came from the very earthly furnaces at a great works twenty miles away.

The comparison of plain and sea is one that comes constantly to the mind in thinking about these kind of views over flatland. In some effects of light and haze, a plain seen from above can impersonate the ocean so perfectly that it takes all your common sense to unmask the illusion. And always plains and the sea have much in common. They are both infinitely various beneath a show of monotony. Both lure the vision onwards in a vain attempt to penetrate distances measureless to man. Therein lies the magic of the westward views over Anglesey from Snowdon and the Glyddrs, or better still, the views from the seaboard mountains of Scotland. Poor Flatlanders ! they have yet to learn that the full glory of flatland is vouchsafed only to those who climb mountains. They little know of lowlands who only lowlands know. . . . One such westward view—a Scottish one—I would like to try and describe before concluding this wandering excursion into comparative topography. It came suddenly, with the wild vicissitude of a dream, as the final gift of a chequered day on Ben Cruachan—a consummation towards which the whole day seemed afterward to lead. Cruachan is one of the comeliest mountains in Scotland. The frame makes a long and high backbone with branching ribs, but the contours have those light and noble rhythms which Raphael loved to draw. The fresh waters of Loch Awe bathe the southern ribs, the salt of Loch Etive wash against the northern. Two great spurs curve sumptuously down to the level meadows near Dalmally. They embrace Corrie Creachainn, slashed in the centre with white where the burn makes a headlong descent. We ascended the northerly

spur, and it was beautiful to look back and down into Glen Orchy. The green meadows and darker trees made a pattern with the twists of the brimful river. Ben Lui and his fellows closed the background. As we breasted the first summit, the main peak of Cruachan shot up ahead, a black spike with swirls of mist about it. They were legacies of yesterday's storm which had seamed the hill-sides with countless temporary burns like overflows of milk, and changed the valley bed into a shallow lake dotted with desolate hayricks for islands. From this summit you can see straight down Glen Noe to the calm water of Loch Etive, and beyond are the hills of Appin. They were yellow with transparent cobalt shadows upon them. Occasionally, we marked the delicate flight of some shadow that echoed a cloud sailing by overhead. Banks of cloud, dazzling with reflected sunlight, hung over the north. Farther along the ridge, between ribs on the southerly side, we gazed down into the savage corrie whose stream breaks through to Loch Awe at the Falls of Cruachan. Loch Awe lay like a snake of silver at rest among the foothills. In the distance, a gleam of silver showed Loch Fyne, and the purple profile of Ben Buie cut into the sky. Then came cloud and rain to blot out any view from the Taynuilt peak and the main peak. But descending towards Bonawe, with white mist billowing above and below us, suddenly we broke out of its zone and came into a world under the spell of enchantment. The transition was quick enough to make one gasp for breath. All the western islands were strung out to receive the sunset: Scarba, Jura, Islay, Colonsay, Mull, Lismore. Loch Awe on the one hand, and Loch Etive on the other,

enclosed the wild low tract called Muckain between Taynuilt and Oban. The sun's rays were flung downwards and backwards by the clouds. They fell in pale gold on the sea. The islands floated insubstantially, a shimmering brown on the golden water. Every hillock and depression was picked out on that rough Muckain country, and its hue was a most brilliant golden brown. Loch Awe had the surface of a steel cuirass. Loch Etive was like a mirror. Then the lighting changed and the Muckain country became dead black with an approaching storm. Slowly, the glow passed and gave place to the cold light of evening. The gold died out of the browns and green appeared instead, and Loch Etive took on a quiet tone of blue. There was a pink edge on the clouds floating far out above the western sea. We descended half dreaming to the ferry at Bonawe and awoke to the real world only at the sound of oars straining against the rowlocks to make good a passage against the current of the swollen river.

What would bechance at Lyonesse
While I should sojourn there
No prophet durst declare,
Nor did the wisest wizard guess
What would bechance at Lyonesse
While I should sojourn there.



HILLS, PLAINS, AND THE PAINTER

THERE are at least four different ways of enjoying a landscape painting. You can enjoy it because it serves to remind you of the look of some place you have liked, or because it has been so manipulated that it tells a story or pricks the emotions, or because the pattern, the sheer arrangement of shapes and colours, is so satisfying that it alone fills the capacity for enjoyment to overflowing. Fourthly, you can enjoy it because it reveals the hidden personality of places.

All places have their inward significance, brooding, as it were, beneath a veneer of objective appearance—their *genius loci*. The romance of topography is in trying to find this elusive spirit. It is a sort of mystical search and, like other mystical ideas, it is hard to convey the sense of it from one mind to another. And yet once you begin to search, you find that others have been on the track before you and are able to point a way and give a number of invaluable hints. The artist, for instance. He, more than anyone else, except the poet, has the power to penetrate below the outward show of things and lay bare the inner personality. He invites us to see things more

intensely than ever we have done before. Thus, the more you delight in topographical romance, the more enthralling and important does it become to know what the great landscape painters have thought about country and how they have expressed it. You have to sharpen and deepen and supplement your own insight by comparison with theirs. Nature and art interweave and react upon one another. You go from the picture to the place and the place to the picture, and the one enriches the significance of the other. When you have read the meanings which Gainsborough and Constable discovered in an English countryside, you go back to the country with keener eyes. And when you have been steeping body and mind in the country, you return to Gainsborough and Constable and realise new depths and subtleties in their vision. So with every sort of landscape. Pictures are the maps of romantic topography. That, at least, is one of their values. I am not suggesting that it is even the most important.

You cannot go far, therefore, in analysing the respective allurements of different kinds of scenery, without asking how this or that sort appealed to the painter and, in comparing the distinctive charms of flatland and highland in the preceding pages, the question, of course, arose, but was purposely slurred over in order that it might be kept for a leisurely exploration under a title of its own. Having once posed it as to plains and mountains, the inevitable answer is that the greater landscape painters have worked almost exclusively in the lowlands. Turner, who seems to have enjoyed the Alps and the English counties alike, makes the notable exception in order to stress the general rule.

This is a somewhat bitter draught for us who profess to

champion the hills. And we have, alas ! a more bitter yet to swallow when we further reflect that the art of landscape painting—the notion of painting out-of-doors nature entirely for its own sake—actually germinated and bore its noblest fruit in Belgium and Holland. Every school of painting which is worth its salt sets itself some problem to solve that has never been satisfactorily conquered by its predecessors. All Europe lay at the painters' feet. It seems almost a perversion of the right relation of cause and effect that when scenery first caught and held the imagination of painters sufficiently to make them spend their energies in learning how to interpret its secrets, it should be that of the most apparently prosaic landscape on which they could have set eyes. We mountaineers cannot help feeling, for instance, that the evolution of art would have been more suitably ordered had the inspiration to paint nature for nature's sake occurred to the men of the Italian Renaissance, all of whom lived within easy access of noble mountain country. Even the Venetians, separated though they were from the highlands by forty miles of deadly level, could climb their campanile at sunset and watch the glow, first enriching the red-tiled roofs of Venice and turning the lagunes to lakes of wine, and then passing over the plain to transfigure the distant foothills of the Dolomites with beams of opalescent light. Many of them were natives of towns at the base of the mountains. Palma came to Venice as a lad from the region of Bergamo. Bassano bears the name of the little town which guards the entrance to the Val Sugano. He worked there for years with the peaks of Primiero but one long day's march away. Titian was born at Pieve de

Cadore, near the heart of the Dolomites. It is true that he was sent away to study painting in Venice when he was ten years old, but he must have seen something of the highland country before he left it. The scenery revealed to any perceptive child makes an impression which is indelible for life. And Titian was no ordinary boy. It is not too extravagant a surmise to think that he may have carried with him through his long magnificent career some memory of childish rides up the Val d'Ampezzo with its ample curves flowing down to Cortina from the crags of Sorapis and Toffana, of tramps beside his father's herdsman to an upland alp whence he would see the comely heights of the Civetta and Monte Pelmo. In his picture of the "Madonna and Child with St. John" at Trafalgar Square there is a passage of swinging blue mountains in the background. The mountain range repeats daringly the intense and brilliant blue of the Madonna's dress. Aesthetically, this passage is a master-stroke of the picture. It focuses and vitalises the whole design. But beyond its aesthetic value you feel that Titian painted those distant mountains so nobly because they had a place in his affections. They are just as he might have seen the Dolomites from some roof in Venice; and you are tempted to imagine that one day, on looking thus at his native hills, he was seized with a sudden nostalgia for the highlands and went away and painted that blue alluring mountain chain. But the nostalgia was only a passing one. Titian's mind was set on sumptuous figure pieces and portraits of fine gentlemen and ladies, and if he had any deep and enduring love of his mountain country he kept it strictly to himself.

The Central Italian painters were even better placed for mountain inspirations. Most of them worked all their days in the hill towns of the Apennines. Yet Perugino, one of the few Italians who seems to have been more interested in out-of-doors nature—and particularly the light effects of out-of-doors nature—than he was in figure painting, deliberately preferred a valley to a mountain setting. His saints and madonnas are lay figures, languid in line and modelling—without form and void. He was called upon to paint them no doubt because he had to make altar pieces and pictures of sacred personages in the convention of his day in order to earn a living. And he showed his lack of interest by lazily taking over some current conception of sentimental religion. Thanks to this surface sentimentalism, his real and gloriously original qualities are apt to be obscured. Was he not the first painter to learn how to render great spaces of crystalline or golden atmosphere? When you look at his masterpiece in the Cenacola at Florence—the noble spacing between the figures, the leagues on leagues of lucent atmosphere, the exquisite handling of the slender trees in the middle distance, you feel that Perugino might have become the most wonderful painter of flatland there has ever been had he been free to concentrate on the interpretation of that aspect of the world which chiefly enthralled him. The flatlanders must have Perugino. Indirectly, we mountaineers have a harder position to defend when we try to explain the indifference of the great Florentines to mountain scenery. For they were interested above all else in the very qualities which appeal to us in a mountain. In Florence, it must be

remembered, a superb school of sculpture flourished alongside the school of painting, and many of the artists practised both branches. The special qualities in objects which a sculptor seeks to interpret are their substance and solidity, the relation of their planes and the rhythms of their contours. When you think of the close connection between sculpture and painting in Florence, it is easy to understand that the sculptor's way of looking at nature should have crept into the painter's vision. For in painting it is possible to express most of the values of sculpture. The painter wanted you to feel that what he depicted was tangible, no wraith which would dissolve into thin air if you attempted to grasp it. He breathed into his forms so vital a force that their essential qualities of mass or weight or dynamic movement appear to be reproduced by appropriate and immensely satisfying sensations in the spectator's own body. Why these sensations can be reproduced and why they should be so strangely satisfying, who shall say? The point of the moment is that here, perhaps, we mountaineers have hit upon a paradoxical explanation for the blindness of the Florentines to their native hills, an explanation, too, which if it succeeds at all, does so without any invidious rivalry between highland and lowland. Are not mountains things of mass and weight? They have rhythm of line and contour. They give an illusion of dynamic force. They have an anatomy and a construction almost as enthralling as that of the human body. They express precisely those ideals which the Florentines were striving for. They do not, however, express them in such plain or immediately attractive

language as may be found for their expression elsewhere. Broadly speaking, when you want to suggest these values you can paint a mountain or an animal or a man. You have, as it were, a choice of fuels to fire the imagination. The imagination of most people would surely flame first from the man. Moreover, throughout Italy, the law of supply and demand backed figure-painting. With the energetic and daring mentality of the Florentines, however, the choice was inevitable. The sudden new fascination that everyone felt for the secrets of his own and his neighbour's personality would make a man observe himself and his neighbour more intently than had ever been done before. And the examples of classical sculpture showed the endless possibilities that were open to the artist once he could master completely the problems of representation. So the Florentines combined their adoration of solidity with an unexampled ardour for studying the intricate structure and movements of the human body. They had everything to learn. They were like children let loose for the first time in some novel house of knowledge and without a thought for anything else until they had discovered it all. No wonder they never had time to lift up their eyes to the hills. From the mountaineer's point of view, it is heartbreaking. They would have painted mountains so much better than anybody else has ever done. From Giotto and Masaccio with their superb feeling for weight and mass to Michelangelo glorying in his power to interpret dynamics, imagine the painters of mountain scenery that these Florentines would have made had some mountaineer's Providence ordained a Pompeian destruction which

should have left them bereft of models, alone in Tuscany with their native hills.

Leonardo is the one edifying exception. He found time to observe and appreciate everything. Scenery for him was almost, if not quite, as interesting as the human body. It is too much, no doubt, to claim him for a painter of mountains, but at least where mountains were concerned his heart, or rather his eyes, were in the right place. There are several entries in his notebooks dealing with the way to represent a mountain landscape. In his famous drawing of a "Landscape with Cloud effect," where rays strike through the massed clouds and light a valley bed and the mountains which close the head of the valley are shadowed black, he anticipates Turner and perhaps surpasses Turner in the special field which Turner made his own. What is more, Leonardo evinced his interest in mountains in the most practical way he could by making the first recorded attempt to ascend Monte Rosa. "Attempt" is an interpolation of my own. He himself writes as if he had reached the summit. But in those golden days before peak-bagging was invented, before there were Siegfried maps to mark off the merciless metres, there was no honour to be satisfied in making sure that you had reached the highest point. It is generally agreed that Leonardo did not get anywhere near the top; that he did get well above the perpetual snowline seems clear from his description. Perhaps, as Mr. Freshfield suggests, he reached the Col d'Ollen, at a height of ten thousand feet. He was so fascinated by the scientific aspect of nature seen from those unwonted heights that he never wrote a phrase

about the real or imaginary dangers of the way! He does not mention having had a companion, either a friend of his own or a man from the district with local knowledge, and though his silence can hardly be taken as conclusive proof that he was unaccompanied, yet it may be permitted us to believe that Leonardo, whose daring mind outstripped his contemporaries on so many tracks of thought, was also the first amateur to carry through a guideless expedition in the High Alps.

The essential difference in appeal to the painter between highland and lowland scenery is brought out most clearly in the work of the first and greatest school of pure landscape painting. Belgium and Holland are countries where a painting must be conditioned by the simplest scenic properties. Here are no baroque fantasies of Coolin or Dolomite rock. The sky fills three-quarters of the painter's vision, then comes a wide level of land limited only by the curve of the earth. He has windmills, rows of poplars, a church spire, big sails beyond a sand dune or a canal bank, a group of black and white Friesian cattle. Yet he need never fear monotony, for he has to better advantage than any hillman the changing shape of clouds. The deeps of atmosphere are his to use for his purposes. There is a small picture by Ruisdael in the Rijks Museum at Amsterdam which shows most admirably what the Dutch could do with these simple means. The painting is of a view near Haarlem and the greater part of the canvas is filled by the sky. It is a blue sky with big grey rain-clouds making a pattern across it, and the blue and grey seem more brooding than you get in the everyday

effects of fleeting sunlight, like a sky with clouds as it is sometimes reflected in water that is not completely transparent. Beneath is the level countryside. The design and colour are masterly, based on a couple of diamond-shaped fields brightly lit in comparison with the low-toned greens of the rest of the landscape. The apex of the farther field leads the eye to the distant town on the horizon, with the church spire breaking the even stretch of skyline and piercing—like a pigmy spire it seems by comparison—the lower reaches of the lofty sky. This horizon line is the climax of the picture. It determines the noble and daring balance of earth and sky, a balance which suggests untold spaciousness.

Here is a poetry denied to the painter of mountains. A man painting a mountain cannot be interested in great spaces of light and atmosphere. His object is to render solid forms which limit and block his vision long before his eyes have found their natural horizon line. Thus Perugino, who appears to have been exclusively interested in light, failed miserably to paint substantial figures. The clearest illustration to this point, however, is probably afforded by Rubens. When Rubens wanted to think in terms of mass and weight and movement, he painted men and women, titans of a giant world. When he wanted to think in terms of light and space, he painted the plains. And this poetry of light and space reaches its zenith at his hands. In his "Château of Steen" at the National Gallery he has distilled for all time the essential magic of the plains. He has done for them what Pater would have us believe that Leonardo did for woman in the portrait of La Gioconda. The light, all

important, comes from the painter's left, and by the length of the shadows it must be afternoon. With consummate skill of composition, he has chosen his place so that the main incidents of the picture, the wagon and the castle half hidden by tall trees, fall on the left of the canvas. Thus, surely, but so quietly that you are hardly conscious of it, he has emphasised the source and flow of the light. The foreground is a bushy heath of glowing brown. Beyond are the long fields, luminous green, dotted with trees, receding ever receding, until they melt at last on to a clear note of turquoise blue near the skyline. Everything is lucent. You look, and the enchantment of the sense of interminable distance on earth steals over you.

It is a vain effort I believe to search for a picture which has done the same thing for the mountains—summed up and set free the mountain genius. Such a picture has yet to be painted. Andromeda still waits for Perseus to strike off the fetters. It would, of course, be far too sweeping to assert that no great painter has ever chosen a mountain subject or done justice to it. Turner and Cézanne immediately flash into the mind. So does Sir Charles Holmes, albeit his star is scarcely so magnificent. There is Crome, too, though he is seldom thought of in this connection. But the fact remains that the supreme picture of mountains has never yet been made. Sir Charles Holmes is our contemporary, and as a mountain painter he has had generous appreciation. But to pit him against Rubens would hardly be fair! Crome tackled the hills but seldom, and he is to be included as a mountain painter more on the promise of one great

picture—"Slate Quarries"—than on any range of achievement. It is a picture of unhampered hills whose brown backs, broad and deep, stretch upwards and away from the artist's viewpoint. There are three, perhaps four, ranks more or less defined, and the great slopes, rich with the hues of old mahogany lavished upon them, culminate in two blunt summits. Beneath, you feel that there are cubic miles of solid rock and earth: the "Cézannesque" quality of three-fold strength, depth, as well as breadth and length. It is almost startling to find it expressed with such Provençal daring in this older master, and you wonder what compelling vision it was that came thus to seize and transform the tranquil painter of lowland commons and meadows. Supposing the vision had remained with him? But, when all is said and done, Crome is hardly one of the supreme painters of the world. Even if the vision had remained with him, he might never have painted the ultimate mountain picture. Turner and Cézanne, however, are among the supreme painters of the world. How is it that they just failed to express completely the mountain soul, failed to body it forth with that gesture of absolute finality and universality with which Rubens made manifest the soul of the plains, and which makes the spectator exclaim: "It is enough, I can ask no more"?

So far as Cézanne is concerned the answer would seem to be fairly straightforward. If he had wanted, if he had set himself to study mountain structure in particular, it was well within his measure to have painted the mountain picture of which we dream. All the gifts of vision that we should seek for in our ideal mountain painter Cézanne

possessed and sought to increase in himself. He understood the virtues of angular things and made splendid rhythms from their interplay. He felt the fundamental weight and mass of nature, the unity beneath a changing surface, as perhaps no one else had ever done before him. He drives his ideas home, in spite of the fact that he was always diffident, almost morbidly diffident, about his powers to express them adequately, with relentless force. The hills of Provence, as they appear in his pictures, broken sometimes with outcrops of rock or a quarry or groups of houses, seem to be of the very stuff from which great mountains are made. Everything he really looked at he saw with a power and an intensity that seem almost incredible. But he was so engrossed in how to see that what to see appears to have become a matter of secondary importance. The hills of Provence gave him all he needed. Indeed, one may surmise from a scrap of conversation reported in M. Vollard's biography that he never stayed long enough among great mountains to live down an initial distrust he had for them as being too theatrically impressive. "You know, M. Vollard," he said, "the grandiose (I don't say it in bad part) grows tiresome after a while. There are mountains like that. When you stand before them you shout 'Nom de Dieu !' But for every day a simple little hill does well enough." So he stuck to the Provençal hills ; and from the mountain lover's standpoint he provides, like the Florentines before him, yet another instance of the disappointing perversity of things. We cannot, however, blame the mountains, or the painters, for that matter. We can only regret and wonder what Michelangelo

would have made of the huge yet lithe strength of the peaks of Valais, for instance, or Cézanne of the splendid angularities of the Chamonix aiguilles. In the heart of Cézanne's paintings of Provençal hills dimly we seem to discern the picture that might have been had the mountain soul imprisoned there been given wings for soaring flight. We seem to see a quivering blue sky and against it the strength of rock, grey and tawny rock marshalled on the canvas so that every buttress and spire and fissure should pile up into a unity. In the work of the common painter mountains appear as so much extraneous waste matter clamped on to the earth's surface. But Cézanne's mountains would have the unity of the very bones of the planet.

The case with Turner is a great deal more complicated. Turner was a painter of mountains, perhaps not first and foremost, but at least equally with any other sort of landscape and, indeed, seascape too. He deliberately sought out big mountains because he loved that kind of scenery. He visited the Alps several times and tramped up their valleys and over the lower passes. He knew the hills of Wales, of Westmorland and Cumberland, of Scotland, including the Coolin; all of them hills perhaps in stature, but mountains in modelling. It was perhaps in the Lake District that he came nearest to the mountain ideal. He released the genius of Westmorland and Cumberland hills so that all the world might wonder. There are several pictures (one of the most interesting is of Lingmell, Scafell, and the Mickledore gap from somewhere near Styhead, but it is unfortunately far from completed) emphatically to prove it. But the greatest

is a big water-colour of a storm over the Langdale Pikes, seen, it may be supposed, from the track to Blea tarn and Little Langdale. The dark key in which it is painted gives weight and knit strength to the forms of the hills. The spurs which descend on the painter's side of the valley frame the storm-encircled Pikes. The colours are brown and green and blue, all swept together, and the contours break with magnificent strength to the valley bed. In the sky, which is charged with blackened clouds, there is a single rift with broken edges and showing pale yellow. From the rift a diagonal shaft of light slopes downward, but in that stormy atmosphere it has not power to do more than make one faint gleam of brighter colour—green—on the valley bed. All that it is really vital to know about the Lake District Turner has crammed into this picture. But when I say "know" it is not meant in the sense of mere recognition. When he came to see them for the first time a man might recognise peaks of the Alps or the hills of Cumberland from a series of photographs. He might know much of their objective quality. It is meant in the human sense of knowing through the impact of the scene upon your own mind, or, better still, upon some greater mind—the mind of Turner, for example. People differ, I suppose, in their power to distil their experiences, refine the essence for themselves. Some, perhaps, can see the essential wonder of the human body without the aid of Phidias or Praxiteles, and some no doubt can win full measure from the Lakes without the help of Turner. But most of us will feel that accumulated days upon the crags and fells, days of wind and rain and cold that saps vitality,

even of sunshine and warmth, are all revealed in Turner's picture, but with a coherence and intensity of vision to which by ourselves we could never hope to attain, although we can profit by Turner's understanding. Surely it is, after all, this same need of common humanity to profit by the clear vision of its great men that lies at the root of the "revealed" religions of the world.

The chiefest perhaps of Turner's artistic interests was the interpretation of movement, not so much the movement of substantial things as the movement of winds and rain and cataracts, of deep onrushing clouds and stealing mists, of the rays of the sun striking through vapour. It is easy to see how this conception of movement stirred him to the depths of his being when you recall that picture of his named "Rain, steam, and speed," in which the Great Western Express, half shrouded in storm, is glimpsed, as it were, for a second rushing across some great viaduct with the hurricane and the slanting rain swallowing the country on either hand and before and behind. Herein, perhaps, lies the secret of Turner's success with the Lake Country. Lakeland hills are not overwhelming with excess of vitality like the Alps. Geologically speaking they have the quiet assurance of age. They do not care to impress their presence with all the daring devices of youth. And their modesty gave especial help to Turner. For they gain their choicest beauty and mystery from effects of mist and broken light upon their crags and slopes and in their valleys, effects which emphasise this feature and obliterate that, giving a sense of pulsing force which is lacking, for instance, on

a quiet summer's day when all is uniformly lit. To win from the Lakeland hills something of the sensations which a man has among great mountains, it is almost necessary that their quietness should be thus reinforced by the play of the weather. It is only then that you get the right feeling of leashed strength and aloofness from the ways of men. That this peculiarity of Westmorland and Cumberland hills happened to fit in so well with the bias of Turner's genius is one of the lucky chances in the story of painting.

But the trend of his genius which stood him in such good stead at home seems to have spoiled rather than helped his chances in the Alps. Most of his Alpine subjects are dominated by this prevailing passion. It is there, for instance, in a certain painting of a cottage destroyed by an avalanche. You feel that he is trying to express the moment after the avalanche has just passed, when life still seems to be in the grip of incalculable rushing force. Almost, you feel as if his mind had been travelling forward on ways of thought unknown to his contemporaries, and that he had been trying to visualise the ruthless geological process which changes the shape of mountains down the ages. His preoccupation is obvious, too, in the way he has done the foreground séracs in one of his drawings of the Mer de Glace. They have flame-like curves that lick along the picture. El Greco might have painted them. But sometimes it seems as if he had to strain his subject to express it. Even séracs have other and more stable qualities! The sense of strain is felt, for instance, when he tries, perhaps unconsciously, to get his favourite effect of movement divorced from

concrete substance in the walls of a wooded ravine. He gives the illusion of it by the angles in relation to one another at which he sets pine-trees and rocks—any objects which stand clear from the general slope of the mountain side. All this, no doubt, is part of the mountain synthesis, but it is merely a part, and Turner is apt to present it as the whole, so that he appears incomplete, and at times positively misleading. He was, of course, a dreamer, one of the most wonderful dreamers who have ever lived. To realise his dreams he sometimes played havoc with the facts of landscape. In the Langdale picture, for instance, he has altered the familiar forms in relation to one another of Harrison Stickle and Pike o' Stickle. But any painter who is worth his salt bends facts to his will. It is questionable, however, whether he has quite so good a right to disguise the spirit of a country. The manipulation of facts may be done in order to wring out the essence, but has he a right to alter the essence with concoctions of his own? The answer would involve traversing a whole aesthetic battle-ground and is quite without the limits of the present argument. But whatever it be, one cannot help feeling that had Turner been a mountaineer he could not—is it impudent to say it?—have dreamed quite the Alpine dreams that he did dream.

There lies a difficulty. It may be that besides having the will to paint mountains it is necessary to know them at intimate quarters. Suppose the Italians had taken to mountain painting with the same passion for comprehension which they expended on the human body? They would have blazed ways into the heart of the Alps and set back the annals of mountaineering by three

centuries. As it was, Leonardo did his best to be a mountaineer. Turner, with that extravagant imagination of his, needed perhaps more than most men of genius the closest first-hand knowledge to keep him anchored to reality. It was not only because Cumberland ministered to his special artistic passion that he was able to paint great pictures of the Cumbrian fells. It was because he had tramped the fells, learned their structure from the contacts of his hands and feet, learned their moods from the communion of long days alone in their presence. He knew them too well to modify their essential meaning with the chemistry of his own fancy. In Cumberland he kept his ear on the two great melodies of the mountain fugue, the adamant core of the hills and the dynamic force of weather ever moulding and re-moulding their surfaces. But in the Alps he got his counterpoint astray. Such, perhaps, is the explanation of how it was that while he could give us the supreme picture of Lakeland fells, he could not universalise it as Rubens universalised the "Château of Steen." His "Storm over the Langdale Pikes" does not connote all mountains for all time. He had not enough first-hand knowledge of a great range. Little is known about his Swiss and Savoyard wanderings, but we may surmise that almost, if not all, his tramping was done below the snowline. Just where the inner mysteries of the Alps begin to be revealed he checked his advance. He was born too soon. Alpine endeavour was only in its infancy when he had the strength of his manhood. Had he lived half a century later he might have been possessed by the impulse to climb the heights as well as to tramp the valleys and passes. He might—who

knows—have stormed the peaks with Leslie Stephen (the two had something of character in common), seen the blue chasms and pinnacles of the upper ice, gauged the rock architecture above the snowline by his man's measure on buttress and ridge. And then . . . well . . . we mountaineers might have been upsides with the flatlanders.





A CUMBERLAND CENTENARY, 1926

You see yon precipice ; it wears the shape
Of a vast building made of many crags ;
And in the midst is one particular rock
That rises like a column from the vale,
Whence by our shepherds it is called the PILLAR.

THUS Wordsworth, in days when rock-climbing was yet unknown, described the cynosure of English cragsmen—that great rock, 500 feet high, which springs from the southern slopes of Ennerdale and was scaled for the first time exactly one hundred years ago.

The climbing of crags and mountains is a true although a late manifestation of the universal effort of mankind to gain the mastery over nature. In any big climb the “human interest,” as publishers’ advertisements call it, is predominant. It is a tale of difficulties ingeniously and courageously surmounted, of the passage through danger. Narratives such as Whymper’s recital of his assaults on the Matterhorn, or Mr. G. Winthrop Young’s of his storming of the south face of the Täschhorn with Franz Lochmatter, read like an epic. The conquest of the

Pillar is of course a humbler affair. And yet it has an historic importance, for it marks the birth of the great sport of rock-climbing in England. For the sake of its "human interest," if for no other reason, there must be many friends of the Lake District who will care to hear the early story of the crag.

From Moses' Trod—the traditional smugglers' track which girdles Great Gable and curves round the head of Ennerdale—you may look down the valley on a summer evening and see the Pillar, true to its name, jutting up from the steep hillside, a deep purple-brown silhouette against the sunset sky beyond. Closer at hand you discover that it is not one huge blunted cone, but two, somewhat as when the index and the middle finger are elevated together. And you find that it is separated from the main mass of Pillar Mountain by a deep cleft. Climbers have christened this cleft the Jordan Gap, and the buttress beyond it Pisgah. Perched aloft on some momentary stance on the Ennerdale face, while you wait perhaps for the leader to finish the next pitch, you can catch unforgettable lightning visions of the cloud shadows racing across the fells on the farther side of the valley ; of the yellow valley bed with its eager stream ; of the smooth and pale surface of the lake. And on New Year's Day you may hear the bay of a foxhound finding scent in the dale, a sound infinitely strange heard from your crow's-nest position, as if it belonged to another world. You may see the pack tearing past far below, small as autumn leaves swept onwards by the wind.

In the second edition of Otley's *Guide to the English Lake District*, published in 1825, the rock is spoken of as unclimbable. Two years later Otley had changed his tune. In the 1827 edition, describing the Pillar Mountain, he says :

It presents towards Ennerdale one of the grandest rocky fronts anywhere to be met with ; and has derived its name from a projecting rock on this side ; which was originally called the Pillar Stone, and had been considered as inaccessible till an adventurous shepherd reached its summit in 1826.

The adventurer was named Atkinson, and he was a native of the dales, living at Croftfoot in Ennerdale. But there is some controversy as to whether or not he was actually a shepherd. There are descendants of his alive to-day who believe that he was, but tradition generally has long been agreed that Otley was wrong and that the conqueror of the Pillar plied the prosaic trade of a cooper. What sudden urge of high endeavour broke upon his cooper's soul—if such it was—and drove him to the Pillar, we shall never know. Had he been a shepherd, his feat might perhaps seem less remarkable, and while there is still a doubt it is a better tribute to him to think of him as a cooper. For the Cumberland shepherds were traditionally tough and plucky, and do not seem to have shared the utter terror of rocks and precipices indulged in by the old writers on Lakeland scenery. Years before they had found the quick way up Scafell from Mickledore by the Broad Stand, a scramble which involves one really exposed step out on to the cliff. Indeed, there was a

story told in the dales long before Atkinson's time that a shepherd had climbed to the top of Pillar rock and there fallen asleep and somehow slipped over the edge. Wordsworth mentions this tale in a note at the head of his poem *The Brothers*.

The poem [he says] arose out of the fact mentioned to me that a shepherd had fallen asleep on the top of the rock called the Pillar and perished as here described, his staff being left midway on the rock.

It will be remembered that Wordsworth makes the shepherd a sleep-walker ; a truly prophetic inspiration on his part, for, had he actually had knowledge of the summit, he must have been aware that it would be wellnigh impossible for any but a sleep-walker to fall off the top having once safely arrived there ! The poem was written and published in 1800, and if any corroboration of Wordsworth's fact could be found, this earlier adventurer who lost his life so strangely in the hour of victory would deserve Atkinson's fame. A contemporary account of Atkinson's exploit was published in a local newspaper, and the writer avers that, " Though the undertaking has been attempted by thousands, it was always relinquished as hopeless." We can safely discount the " thousands," but the enthusiastic exaggeration shows that already an interest was being taken in the rock, and makes it very unlikely that a previous ascent should have escaped being chronicled. Indeed, quite apart from attempts to ascend it, the rock must have had a local fame in the valley. During the latter half of the eighteenth century there were red deer in the Crown Forest of

Ennerdale, and sheep used occasionally to find their way up on to the rock, when the deer were lords of the forest pasturage, in search of a chance bite of grass. But sometimes an old stag would choose the Pillar for a look-out post; and if he found any sheep in possession he would fork them over the side without ceremony. It is not to be supposed that either stags or sheep ever wandered to the top of the rock. Probably they picked their way along the easy ledges which lead into Stony Gully and stuck at the index finger or "Low Man." Here the forking operations would take place. And so many sheep were lost in this way that the shepherds finally assembled at the foot of the rock and, handing stones from one to another, built a wall across the entrance neck to prevent either stags or sheep indulging in any more rock-climbing.

The tradition of a previous ascent would seem to be finally disposed of by the Rev. James Jackson, that eccentric and lovable cleric who styled himself "Patriarch of the Pillarites" and met his death in an attempt to climb the rock at the age of eighty-two. Of Mr. Jackson's exploits and personality some account must be given later on, for no story of the Pillar could be complete without its "Patriarch." So late as 1876 he heard the tale that a young Bowman of Mireside, in Ennerdale, had been found dead at the foot of the Pillar Rock one hundred years before. Writing to Mr. George Seatree in a letter which I have been kindly permitted to use, he says :

Now, as Patriarch of the Pillarites, I was jealous of the reputation of the Rock and was unwilling that it should be burdened with a catastrophe of which it might be guiltless.

I therefore wrote to Mr. John Bowman of Mireside to inquire if there was any tradition in his family of such a fatality having happened to some juvenile branch a hundred years ago. This is his answer : " Rev. Sir,— The name of the man who lost his life upon the mountains of Ennerdale was John Bowman. But it was not the Pillar Rock from which he fell, but from a rock about one mile higher up the dale." The fact [concludes Mr. Jackson with a pleasant sarcasm at Wordsworth] appears to be this : the poet had heard that there had been a fatal fall from a rock in the Ennerdale mountains, but all the rest is " airy nothing " to which the poet's pen had given " a local habitation and a name."

Atkinson emerges with his claim well established. He climbed alone, and the route he took was on the western side of the crag, and is now called the " Old West Climb." For modern cragsmen it is a course of no intrinsic difficulty, and fully to appreciate Atkinson's intrepid spirit we must obliterate modern standards from our minds and invoke the awe with which the crags were invested one hundred years ago. Eager huntsmen for the picturesque were in full cry over the Lake District. It was the heyday of the romantics and the rhapsodists who swept away in soulful contempt the orderly and practical scenic preferences of the eighteenth century. You have the controversy crystallised in a conversation in *Sense and Sensibility* between Marianne Dashwood and Edward Ferrers, in which Miss Austen peppers both parties impartially with her inimitable darts. It is too long to quote in full, and it would be vandalism to prune it, so I refer the reader to the eighteenth chapter of that glorious book.

A Scottish gentleman once asked Dr. Johnson how he liked the Highlands. Answers Dr. Johnson, representative of the eighteenth century : " How, sir, can you ask me what obliges me to speak unfavourably of a country where I have been hospitably entertained ? Who can like the Highlands ? . . . I like the inhabitants very well." The damning distinction implied leaves no doubt as to what Dr. Johnson thought of the " Bens." It is perhaps hardly fair to the eighteenth century unservedly to epitomise it in Dr. Johnson. So long as you did not ask it to climb any mountain steeper than Skiddaw, it was sometimes ready to appreciate a mountain view. About the same time that Johnson took his Scottish tour Thomas Gray explored part of the Lake District. He, too, made a Journal of his expedition, and he seems to have had a far more sensitive eye for scenery than the learned doctor. No writer has penned more charming description of Lakeland scenes, always provided he was allowed to observe the mountains from a distance. Ullswater, Grasmere, and Derwentwater gave him exquisite enjoyment. Everyone who has come from Grasmere to Derwentwater by Dunmail Raise will remember the beautiful prospect suddenly revealed when the road drops over Castlerigg. Gray was taking the pass in the other direction, and from Castlerigg he looked back, and was fain to return to Keswick, for the sun breaking out discovered the most enchanting view he had yet seen of the whole valley—the two lakes, the river, the mountains in all their glory. He was fortunate. " The sun breaking out " explains his particular delight. For there is no

view in the district which gains more from the glowing indigo and enamel-like green which flood hills and dales when the sun has but half dispersed the rainclouds. White clouds and bitter grey ; lakes of crystalline sky ; royal blue and violet shadows on the shapely curves of Catbells ; paler violet filming Causey Pike, which rises so gracefully yet deceptively tall ; in the distance the Buttermere Mountains ; nearer at hand the silver water and the swampy meadows between Derwentwater and Bassenthwaite, green like the plumage of a parakeet—these make a colour harmony as rich as the interwoven chords and melodies of some great orchestral piece. Such a view, which he might command from the secure vantage of a civilised road, Gray could enjoy to the full. But let him excursion to Borrowdale and his pleasure vanishes. At that time, apparently, the dale was penetrated only by a vile cart-track, which must have been as often as not under flood-water. And the Borrowdale streams are incomparable at their job of flooding out the road. I was once driving a car one pitch-dark summer night in pouring rain up the dale. Suddenly we dashed into water where the dale narrows at the celebrated “jaws.” We proceeded very gingerly, immersed just to the axles. Then the engine stopped. The rapidly rising water had entered the carburettor. In the space of little more than an hour, having made various abortive efforts to extricate the car, we were wading waist-deep to salvage our suit-cases and rucksacks, which were awash on the back seat. At Rosthwaite they told us that three hours earlier there had not been a puddle on the road, and next

morning the car was found high and dry, and cleaner than it had been for many a week !

Gray admits that when he visited Borrowdale he got no farther than Grange. The sight of Gowder Crag appears to have been too much for the eighteenth century.

The rocks at top, deep-cloven perpendicularly by the rains, hanging loose and nodding forwards, seem just starting from their base in shivers. The whole way down, and the road on both sides, is strewn with piles of fragments strangely thrown across each other, and of a dreadful bulk ; the place reminds me of those passes in the Alps, where the guides tell you to move on with speed and say nothing lest the agitation of the air should loosen the snows above, and bring down a mass that would overwhelm a caravan. I took their counsel here and hastened on in silence.

It is interesting to note the difference in the attitude of the dale farmer and the occasional visitor. Gray himself relates how the farmer at Grange had been let down over a cliff on a rope in order to take an eagle's eyrie, a proceeding that must have required considerable bravery. Every hamlet rose in arms to fight the eagles, whose depredations among the lambs, not to mention hares, partridges, and other game, were very serious.

A generation or two later the peaceful penetration of the district by romantically minded excursionists was in full swing. Tourists had begun to find a "fascination frantic" in the rugged and perpendicular flanks of a mountain, in the Stygian gloom of a gorge, in the dragon teeth of a serrated ridge—still always provided that they did not push their acquaintance too intimately.

Already, in 1818, Thomas Love Peacock has a dig, in *Melincourt*, at

the more profane hand of the picturesque tourist who contrives by the magic of his pencil to transport romantic terrors from the depths of mountain solitude to the gay and crowded, though not very wholesome atmosphere of a metropolitan exhibition.

Peacock himself was too good an artist as well as too keen a humorist to lose his head and his sense of proportion in describing a rugged prospect. He has woven some delightful vignettes of mountain scenery into *Melincourt*, and he actually allows his heroine to take quite a stiff walk unaccompanied. But the old guide-book writers who ministered to the voracious romantic appetite of the tourist practised for the most part no such restraint. An edition of Housman's *Guide to the Lake District*, published the year before Waterloo, is a model of tourist catering. Housman wished to be thought a plain man. "Unexaggerated descriptions, in plain and simple language, are here principally aimed at," he says in his preface. Having thus produced an impression of moderation and trustworthiness, he proceeds to borrow from the most sensational descriptions that he can find. How must his readers' emotions have been strung up on setting out for Buttermere when they had read as follows of the innocuous and pleasant pass of Whinlatter, between Keswick and Lorton :

The steeps and Alpine passes of Whinlatter [he is quoting from Hutchison's *History of Cumberland*] form an ascent of five miles up stupendous heights by a

winding path. . . . You look down from such tremendous precipices on whose brink you are travelling that from the windows of a carriage the aspect and situation are alarming.

A passage such as the preceding conveys an idea of how the fells were regarded by visitors just over a century ago. We shall get a more accurate measure of the attitude of the natives from the *Tourist's New Guide*, published by Green in 1819. Green was a county surveyor, and during his survey of North Lancashire had occasion for many expeditions among the fells. Like the dalesmen, work took him into the heart of the mountains, and not merely along the tourist-beaten tracks. He is bracing :

The mountains . . . are daily traversed by shepherds, and could the luxurious citizen submit to training, he might ascend their most aspiring heights as easily as he now ascends from 'Change to Islington.

He was not easily rattled, but Sharp Edge, on Saddle-back, tried his nerves. He went there with Otley, a Keswick man and well acquainted with the hills, and he says that "it has less of safety to recommend it than singularity."

We had not gone far before we were aware that our journey would be attended by perils ; the passage gradually grew narrower, and the declivity on each hand awfully precipitous. From walking erect we were reduced to the necessity either of bestriding the ridge or of moving on one of its sides with our hands lying over the top, as a security against tumbling into the tarn on the left, or into a frightful gulley on the right, both of immense depth. Sometimes we thought it prudent to return, but that

seemed unmanly, and we proceeded ; thinking with Shakspear that dangers retreat when boldly they are confronted.

These two showed the true cragsman's spirit ; and it is curious to reflect on the harmlessness of the place that called for such courage. As a scramble, Sharp Edge comes somewhere between the better known Striding Edge on Helvellyn and Crib Goch on Snowdon. It is a little narrower and more vertiginous than Striding Edge, and much shorter than Crib Goch. It is not even mentioned in Abraham's *British Mountain Climbs*. Compared with Atkinson's route up the Pillar Rock it is negligible.

Yet Green and Otley were among the more adventurous spirits of the time. We can see Atkinson in the brave light which he deserves if we set his exploit against a background of this adventure on Sharp Edge. The lonely daring of Atkinson's project and the cool-headed pluck which he brought to its execution rank him among the pioneers of the human race. His could be no spectacular performance, like that, for instance, of Jacques Balmat, conqueror of Mont Blanc, yet he was equally the inaugurator of an era and the consequences of his victory equally important and far-reaching. Without a Jacques Balmat in the background the great snow peaks of the Alps might never have been scaled, but without an Atkinson, two English climbers would never have made the first guideless ascent of the tremendous rock face of the Grépon from the Mer de Glace.

The modern easy route up the Pillar Rock, known as

the "Slab and Notch," proceeds up the eastern face of the High Man. It was apparently first discovered in 1863 by a Cambridge party led by Mr. Conybeare and Mr. A. J. Butler. Times were changing. A year or two later Prior's *Guide to the Lakes* was reviewed in the *Alpine Club Journal* and the reviewer is positively amused by Prior's wholesome awe of a precipice.

He speaks of the Pillar Rock, a fair bit of rockwork, with amazing respect, and says of Mickledore, the gap between Scawfell and Scawfell Pike, that "even the Alpine Club would decline to attack it without ropes." [Here the scorn of the reviewer is withering.] Ropes would be an absurdity [says he]. The passage is found to be one . . . up which, to say nothing of members of the Alpine Club, most tolerably active ladies could climb with a little assistance.

Both Prior and the reviewer are apparently referring to Broad Stand rather than to the actual col of Mickledore. Even old-fashioned Prior could hardly suggest that a man would need a rope on the col.

Ladies who could adventure with a little assistance on Mickledore were shortly to make their debut on the Pillar. On July 9, 1870, Miss A. Barker, of Bolton Hall, Ronald Parker, of Park Nook, and C. A. Barker, 89th Regiment, ascended the rock. It is an interesting coincidence that the first woman to climb the Central Buttress on Scafell, the most difficult course in the whole district, should be a namesake of the woman pioneer of the Pillar. More than fifty years separate these ladies' exploits. The "Slab and Notch" is a very simple rock

climb. The Central Butress requires faultless nerves and skill of the highest order. A comparison of the relative intrinsic merits of these two performances makes a most striking measure of the advance in rock-craft during the last two generations, and, incidentally, of the advance in feminine accomplishment at what used to be called the "manly sports." Yet honour where honour is due. Miss Mabel Barker would be the first to admit that equal courage and perhaps superior initiative were required by her predecessor on that humble climb half a century ago.

Miss A. Barker was followed in 1874 by Miss May Westmorland, whose ascent, celebrated in verse in the *Whitehaven News*, gave rise to an amusing correspondence in the course of which we are introduced to the Rev. James Jackson, then only Patriarch designate of the Pillar. This grand old man of the mountains deserves an essay to himself. As a young fellow he fought the French "for King George upon his throne" in gold epaulettes and a blue coat. But he soon exchanged his blue coat for a black one and the sea for a Lancashire parish. He must have been something of an enigma to his parishioners. On one occasion he was observed performing airy feats on his church steeple in order to secure a faulty weathercock, "under circumstances of danger," as he himself remarked, "from which the workmen recoiled—the squire's man sickened at the sight." His character had that mixture of modesty and naïve boastfulness that we sometimes find in children. He gave up his parish in 1856 and came to live in the

Lake District, and when we meet him in connection with the Pillar he is an old man. He called himself *senex juvenilis*, and was never tired of recounting the mighty walks he had made in his ripe old age. In the space of a week during his sixty-ninth year he walked forty-six miles in fourteen and a half hours on one day, fifty-six miles in eighteen hours on the third day following, and sixty miles in under twenty hours after another three days' interval. There are not many modern fell-walkers who could beat such a record even at their physical zenith; and Parson Jackson was by no means insensible to his own prowess. But when he heard that a lady had ascended Mont Blanc in January of the year in which, at the age of seventy-nine, he conquered the Pillar, he gallantly and unreservedly gave up to her his laurels, calling his own performance a very tame affair compared with hers. Miss Westmorland, however, stung his pride. He had not then succeeded in climbing the rock, and he wrote to the paper in "incredulous amazement" at her "alleged" feat, backed by the opinion of "Auld Will" Ritson, the famous landlord of Wasdale Head, that no woman could do it, and that Pillar Fell had been mistaken for the rock. Evidently neither Ritson nor Parson Jackson had heard of Miss Barker's ascent at that time. Ritson's opinion of climbing exploits was apt to be sceptical. Mr. George Seatree relates how he once asked "Auld Will" if he knew of a course which he and a friend had done on Scafell—now called the Penrith climb. "No," was the reply, "an' if it's t' seam pleeace as aa mean aa doan't think

ye've been up. Nowt but a fleein' thing cud git up theer."

Miss Westmorland's evidence was so conclusive that the doubting old clergyman had to admit it. He apologised humorously and handsomely, and, nothing daunted, announced that he was then in his seventy-ninth year, and had not yet abandoned hope that he might drop his visiting-card into the bottle at the top of the rock which some ingenious climber had placed there to hold the roll of ascents. "I have," he wrote to Mr. Seatree about this time, "been beneath the Falls of Niagara. I have sung 'God save the King' in the ball of St. Peter's. I have ascended Vesuvius in the eruption of 1828. I have capped Snowdon in Wales and Slieve Donard in Ireland, and nearly all the high hills in this district. . . . It only remains for me to mount the Pillar Rock, and then I may sigh for something else to conquer." His hope was fulfilled on May 31, 1875. He was a great versifier and celebrated his ascent :

The Pillar smiled—a sober smile,
When on his dizzy height
Last day of May there proudly stood
An aged errant knight.

When man, he wrote in small P. P.,
Expressive of his charge,
But now he writes in age P. P.,
But they're in letters large.

Proudly he exchanged his parish priesthood for the more glorious title of "Patriarch of the Pillar !"

Three years later the mountains claimed him. He fell by the hand he had been so anxious to exonerate from dealing death. Is it over-fanciful to think that the great rock regarded it as a kind of ὕβρις that this "verdant old gentleman" (the phrase is his own) should scale its buttresses unscathed? What happened exactly cannot be known, for he was solitary. The search party found his body in the Great Doup, a deep mountain cove just to the east of the crag. Apparently he had not been on the rock, but had slipped from the craggy fell. In those days the high-level path from Wasdale Head had not yet been beaten by the feet of countless climbers to a track, and you approached the rock over the fell. The day had been thick with mist. There is something noble and satisfactory in the lonely end of the old mountaineer :

And had he not high honour,
The hillside for a pall?

To die alone on the fells full of years, and with mental and bodily vigour unsapped, is a consummation of life that most cragsmen must hope for in vain.

With Parson Jackson holding the stage we may ring down the curtain. He closes the first, and perhaps most fascinating, act in the drama of the Pillar. It was for the generation which was growing up when he died to make and enjoy the golden age of cragsmanship. For in every craft the initiators have, as a rule, the least opportunity for positive achievement. The deeds of the men of the 'eighties and 'nineties are sufficiently recorded in climbing literature, and make brilliant reading, but

they belong to a more technical and specialised set of interests. Climbers like J. W. Robinson, Owen Glynne Jones, Charles Hopkinson, Mr. Haskett Smith, Professor Norman Collie and Mr. Cecil Slingsby blazed a trail up every crag in Cumberland.

Said caustic Will Ritson, looking on: "What's makkin' ye fellas fash yer-sels seea mich aboot climmin' t' crags? Isn't t' fells big enough for ye?"





THE EARTH AT DAWN

MOST people see the sun go down nearly every day of their lives. At least they are in a position to do so by taking a very little trouble. The drama is conveniently timed and they have but to look up from their work, to move perhaps from an easterly room to one facing west, to step for a moment out of doors, and some part, at any rate, of the great pageant will be enacted before their eyes. Even Londoners, cut off though they be from most of the dramatic enterprises of nature, are well placed for watching this one. Thousands of people, emerging into the open air at the end of their day's work, pass along the Embankment at an hour when they may look up-stream and see coppery yellow flecks upon the water and the Houses of Parliament and the square buildings and tall chimneys on the Surrey bank placed against a sky of crimson or golden grey haze. The long western perspective of Oxford Street makes a perfect frame for the setting sun. It floats midway between the tips of the chimney-stacks on either side the street like a glowing football and then falls straight and true through the goal-posts as if some

hero-player had propelled it with a titanic drop-kick. So accurate is the drop at the autumn season that one can imagine archaeologists of the dim future, who might be poring over a ruined London, last landmark of our dead civilisation, inventing a religion for us twentieth-century Londoners when they came to reconstruct the line of the street. They would arrive at it much as our present-day scientists infer the worship of our remote ancestors from the orientation of Stonehenge. And how the essayists of the day would seize upon the copy and work up its poetry and pathos. For ours would be the cult of the setting sun and the declining year—the religion of farewell. They would symbolise it as a pathetic clinging to warmth and light and the fullness of harvest ere we became engulfed in the bitter-tasting and eye-searing fogs of winter. For they would know through hard-dying tradition and story of the smoke curse which we builders of an industrial civilisation brought upon ourselves. “*Morituri te salutant*,” one more emotionalised than the rest might entitle his paper.

Since the streets and the river between Charing Cross and Blackfriars run roughly east and west, there is of course a double aspect to the case. Every morning, at the proper hour, the great twin drama of the dawn takes place over Holborn and beyond St. Paul’s. This might make a somewhat confusing problem for those archaeologists of the future. It is irresistible to fancy two sets of them, the champions of the Rise and the champions of the Fall, engaged in a deadly controversy as to whether the key of our religion was *ave* or *vale*. No doubt they would fight with the noble intensity of our own learned

professors attacking kindred subjects. Perhaps some scraps of our lighter verse, preserved through the ages by way of folk song or nursery rhyme, might help them in deciding the battle. Conceive, for instance, of the glorious buttress to the theory of the Fallists should they discover an ancient ancestry and symbolic meaning for the jingle which they may have learned at their mothers' knees :

When the snow is snowing,
And it's murky overhead,
O, it's nice to get up in the morning :
But it's nicer to lie in bed !

And suppose Mr. Winthrop Young's Pen-y-Pass Climbing Song were to survive. It easily might survive, for it has begun life in the classic folk-song way, orally transmitted in bardic style by its author at the annual gathering of the clans. Most of it, no doubt, would have to be written off as incomprehensible—connected with some esoteric worship of hills and impossible to fit into the scheme of Oxford Street. But one line there is on which the champions of the Fall would pounce with triumphant glee :

There is sunrise to hear of and sunset to see.

The inference would be unmistakable. Imagine the hosts of the dawn in disordered retreat and our decadent twentieth-century preference for the decline rather than the rise of the sun established as an unassailable historical fact.

Those champions of the Fall, let us confess, would not be very far wrong. For myself, I think I could easily

count the occasions on which I have seen an unabridged performance of dawn, and I would engage that the average man or woman—certainly the average Londoner—is in the same poverty-stricken condition. Country folk probably do better than townspeople. Farmers, for instance, must have a thousand memories of those pallid dawns which break over an agricultural country, when the cattle are discovered standing knee-deep in earth-clinging mist and millions of beads of dew poise on the surface stalks of the heaps of hay in a mown field, and a pale sun streams across the summer pastures. But farmers are alleged to take a coarse and practical view of nature and to be unmindful of the æsthetic side. Perhaps they are unobservant of their occasions for poetry. There were a farmer and his wife, of whom I knew, who became the parents of a son about the fruit time of the year. The doctor who was attending the mother happened to be present when a name for the boy was being discussed. Looking out of the window, the doctor saw stretches of bronzed corn-land, and in an instant of felicity said: "Call him Harvest." So Harvest he was christened, and as Harvest he flourished, and in his turn married and had a son borne to him. Blind to the cycle of the seasons in his fields and blankly unappreciative of the apposite beauty of his own name, he had his boy baptised Walter.

We Londoners are equally unmindful of our opportunities. One of the loveliest versions of the sunrise that nature has ever invented is played almost on our doorsteps. I admit to speaking for its loveliness on the authority of Wordsworth and not as an eye-witness.

Policemen pacing their beats in the small hours, and down-and-outers, who spend the night under the lee of the Embankment, and lorrymen driving market produce into Covent Garden from Kent and Surrey, may have an eye for it. Jaded and irritable Members of Parliament step out perhaps on to the terrace to get a breath of cool air during an all-night sitting and turn their gaze to the lighted east and hear the quiet lap of the water at their feet. It may be that some sleepy bargee anchored under Cleopatra's needle glances with pleasure downstream when he tumbles up on deck at the turn of the dawn tide to see to the moorings of his craft at strain against the ebb. But I can think of few other categories of Londoner of whom one could confidently assume that they had seen an aspect of their city which Wordsworth asserted to be unsurpassed in its fairness all the earth over. It is true that Wordsworth was not a greatly travelled man as persons go nowadays; but he had seen the lights and shadows which play over the rising snowfields of Mont Blanc, he knew what the head of Windermere looks like when the evening glow turns the water into liquid flame and drawing all substance from the Langdale Pikes presents them as graceful wraiths of shimmering fire. He had seen the colours of the western coast of Scotland. So he might fairly claim to be entitled to his opinion. It is a very humiliating admission on our part that we are not in a position either to back it or discredit it. And our self-respect could so easily be restored, even to-morrow, were it not for the immutable truth embedded in the last line of that nursery rhyme of the future age.

On the rare occasions when circumstances contrive that one should witness a sunrise, the event seems solemn and strange and secret ; a thing—in spite of the manifest illusion—outside our knowledge of the regular occurrences of nature's working day. Sunset is familiar and companionable by comparison—an experience that has been with us all our days. Few people, for instance, would have a distinct recollection of the first sunset they ever saw. Sunsets were as much a part of daily childish life as dinner or play or garden flowers. But many must remember vividly their first sunrise. In my case, it was from the sea, looking over the flats of Holland, and I was about eleven years old. Eagerly awaited by me as a new and marvellous event in life, it came after the excitement of spending a night wrapped in rugs on the deck of the Flushing steamer, and I have the sense of it and the look of it still vivid and quick in my memory. The magic born of that first sunrise is present in all sunrises. It is the sense of assisting at a mysterious happening at which no one has ever assisted before and at which perhaps no one will ever assist again—as if the spectator had come upon a process of nature that was not really meant for the contemplation of man.

Particularly, for some reason, did this seem the case one early morning in Skye at the of end September. It was the last morning of a lightning visit to the Coolin at the end of a holiday which had been spent among the hills of Appin and Mamore. We had to leave the inn at Sligachan about half-past six to motor to Broadford, where we should catch the Mallaig steamer. As we stood outside the inn waiting to start, we looked up Glen Sligachan to

the Coolin, red and black. The contrast between the red range and the black is always startling. The red hills are smooth-shaven and of a mouse-grey colour, streaked with pinkish scree. They are founded on granite and have comely symmetrical contours. But the black range is peaked and craggy, split into spikes and towers and steeped in rich purple shadows, and based on slopes of deep umber coloured moorland. That early morning, the sedate forms of the red Coolin looked like foils expressly designed to set off the wild spires of gabbro and basalt to the west, and only divided from them by the narrow trench of the glen. The light was behind the red hills and the comely cone of Glamaig was in silhouette, with the outline most delicately pencilled against the sky ; up the glen, Marsco glistened, a clear blueish grey. But the black Coolin had already snared the rays of the morning sun, and Sgurr-nan-Gilleán was all lighted up. Every detail could be traced on the violet-coloured cliffs which lead up to the three raking towers on the summit ridge, and almost could be distinguished each stone and blade of coarse reed-like grass on the mountain's brown and yellow base.

Autumn in Skye is apt to be a rough time, and we had had our share of storm. But the great white gusts and downpours of rain had struck the glens and mountain sides as with a magician's wand, leaving them with an almost unbelievable richness of tone and colour when the weather cleared, which it had done the previous day. The heather had attained the mellow hue of old mahogany. The rude grass, tipped with hot brown and orange, made the corries like huge bowls of burnished bronze. The

slabby rocks embedded there gleamed like the wet backs of sea-monsters sunning themselves. Streams in spate curled over rapids with crests of brownish foam. This unrestrained gipsy mingling of rich and rough might have left one's winter memory of Skye too restless and exciting. Something else was needed to cool and sweeten the effect of the reckless hills. At the last minute, as if by a miracle, we passed under the influence of that serene dawn. There was no one about outside the inn but the driver of the car and an old gillie. The precincts were still and quiet. All objects in sight seemed to be holding their breath in expectancy. Loch Sligachan and the moorland were bathed in bright rose-coloured haze. The sky was mottled with grey and rosy clouds. We drove by the shore of Loch Sligachan, half-circling Glamaig, and across a moor to Loch Eilort, and then by the water's edge. The lochs were smooth as mirrors and reflected the colours of sky and hill and moorland as vividly as if they were veritable surfaces of glass. Indeed, the reflection seemed more vivid than the reality, the colours being inconceivably pure and deep as in ancient enamel work. Occasionally, we passed a crofter's hut built half underground and apparently deserted. There was no nearer sign of human life. We seemed to be sharing the privacy of nature ; and not even the fact that we were travellers in a Ford motor-car was potent to mar the completeness of the spell. It was the spell of Keats' *St. Agnes' Eve*, when young Porphyro, hiding in the closet, saw for the first time the gracious bedroom rites of his mistress by the light of the wintry moon that shone through the emblazoned window.

Later in the morning, the clouds closed in and we saw no more of the Coolin. We stood in the bows of the steamer with a stiff wind blowing in our teeth, while behind us, amidships, a native was playing on the pipes. His music came to our ears in spite of the breeze. He did not play very well, but he seemed a genuine son of the Hebrides, piping for the pleasure of himself and his own people, and not in order to show off before the Sassenach tourist ; and we welcomed his skirling as a final and fit farewell to the island of glamour and delight.

In the spring of that same year, I had witnessed another sunrise—over the water meadows of Touraine, a far cry enough from the Hebrides. This dawn was equally beautiful, but so different in character that, setting the two memories side by side, it seems incredible they should represent precisely identical processes of nature. Yet from one to the other nothing was altered except the scene which we ourselves should see to take first the light of the coming day as league after league of the earth's surface swung round out of darkness to greet the sun. In place of the hills and the broken coastline of Skye, we had poplar-trees and the broad expanse of the River Loire. In place of the crystal air of the far north-west, we had a fuller-toned less jocund atmosphere. Instead of submission to the brave and elemental influences of the hills, our eyes and imaginations were under the enchantment of that winsome renaissance which came to France under François I., a time when it seemed that no decorator could make anything other than comely and in pure taste, when there was never an unseemly touch to disfigure the perfect bloom of the artistic grape. Differences like

these seem fundamental to us men with our sensitive reactions to each trivial change in the aspect of things and our inveterate habit of attaching a sort of personal action to every function we have discovered of the vast automatic machinery of nature. It is hard to believe, for instance, that the sun's light breaks over the Loire and the Sligachan burn alike, with perfect impartiality and indifference, in a sublime take it or leave it style. The earth circles nearer or farther from the sun in the change of the seasons. Incidentals alter; the density of the atmosphere, the moulding of the country, the mood of the watcher. Upstart Alps may heave themselves above the chaos of Central Europe and the once tall and infinitely hoarier hills of Wales, worn to mere ghosts of their former might, may settle down to an honourable decline; ice may advance and recede over half a continent; but the basic function of the earth ever to spin on its axis so that one longitude after another shall be drenched in life-giving rays remains inviolate and unalterable.

There is a stern poetry in the thought of these immutable and heedless laws on which our planet depends, greatly more sublime—to some minds, at any rate—than the poetry of the old personal myths of the sun. Yet these myths are so bound up with our traditions and our habits of thought, inconsistent though we know them to be with reality, that we still think and describe in their terms. Four hundred years have elapsed since Copernicus discovered the truth, but yet we talk of sunrise and zenith and sunset, indeed have no other words with which to refer to the process of lighting the earth. Nor do we use these words as mere token money;

instinctively we conceive of the universal lighting installation as they suggest it to us. It is the old metaphor of Phaeton rising from an eastern bay and driving his chariot across the heavens until he sinks into ocean again at the western confines of the earth that springs most easily and naturally to the imagination. Believers in the verbal inspiration of the Bible still hold that Joshua really did induce Jehovah to stay the course of the sun so that his soldiers might complete at their leisure the slaughter of the retreating foe. And after all, if the sun is to be thought of in the careless way we do think of it, as a mere lamp sent travelling across the sky for the express benefit of mankind, the belief is not so unreasonable. Divine backing of your side is a popular and very respectable creed, not only amongst jingo peoples. To visualise the actual ways of the earth with the sun requires a real exertion of imagination. We have to stretch our minds to these mighty facts which have all the superficial appearances of nature against them, just as on a trifling scale we have to concentrate quite grimly on the motion of a train running at different speed to the one in which we may be travelling in order to realise that the two are not going in contrary directions. Some suggestion of a beautiful mechanical accuracy in this dawn over the River Loire loosened for once fancy's hold on the old myths and similes and enabled the watcher to come as it were face to face with undisguised reality. The mists of conventional and picturesque metaphor dissolved, leaving a clear vision of the operation of universal law in all its astringent beauty.

We were staying in Blois. Everyone who has visited

Blois will remember the charming Hotel d'Angleterre with its façade along the river. It may have been built as the town house of a French nobleman and later converted to the uses of an inn. The coffee-room, for instance, is a long narrow apartment that should once have served as a ball-room. Its latticed windows give on to the immense sweep of the river and the Gothic bridge of stone, lithe and long, as lovely a monument as the castle itself. There are bedrooms too which face the river, and our party were fortunate in having procured some of them. We went to bed with our fancies full of the civilisation so strangely mixed of cruel and gracious elements which flowered in the castle enclosure of Blois; the little panelled chamber of Catherine de Medicis, for instance, in which she kept her secret store of poisons, and where every separate panel of the walls was carved in low relief with its own design of curling leaves, and urns, and mythical birds and monsters, the carving being delicately gilded against a dark painted field. About five o'clock in the morning one of our party awoke and happening to look out of the unshuttered window saw above the eastern horizon, seemingly close at hand in that level country, the glow of light which precedes the appearance of the sun. She knocked us all up, and clad in coats and pyjamas, leaning out of our various windows, we watched a river of gold just divided by a fringe of dark trees from an orange sky which had one great cloud, all fleecy and luminous, trailing across it. We had not long to wait. Presently, beyond the trees a segment of white fire appeared and became a disk. The earth spun onwards so that every second the width of sky was increased between the horizon

and that glowing disk. And the disk seemed slowly to draw back into itself all richness of gold from the great cloud and the river. We gazed until the whole of our part of the earth's surface was in daylight. Then we slipped back to bed, awed with the sense I have tried to describe of a machinery which takes no account of the ages, or the peoples, or the beauties of the earth, which makes no comparisons or discriminations, but

Still with unhurrying chase,
And unperturbed pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy.

fulfills its function of bringing the evil and the good alike for their daily term under the beams of the vital sun. To acknowledge this in that laughing land of Touraine to which man has added so much loveliness had a strangely tonic effect. Imagination burned at the white light of that bracing realism.

On both these occasions, the view of dawn was the result of a merely chance circumstance. We should not have seen it over the fields and river of Touraine unless someone had chanced to wake at the critical moment, nor should we have been abroad in time to view it over the island of Skye, unless we had had to pick up a steamer at Broadford. It had nothing immediately to do with the arrangement of our days. There is one holiday pursuit, however, in which sunrise becomes of prime importance in the plan of a time-table and as familiar a part of daily life as sundown. To the Alpine climber, the hour of the light's arrival, the waxing and waning of heat, and the hour of the light's departure, are considerations on which

his life even may depend. He is astir and off before the first presage of dawn in order to capture the maximum daylight on the heights, or so that he may make in safety some distant passage, raked perhaps by stones and avalanches if he leave it until the noontide heat has unsealed the prison gates of frost. He goes forth into the star and moonlit night and sees the night sky with its dull glow like gunmetal change first to velvet grey and then to green and the blue of woodsmoke. He sees the pearly orb of the moon gradually cloud over, as if some mysterious being had breathed on its lustrous surface, and become insubstantial until at length it seems to float in the broad firmament of day like a white shadow of the greater sun. He sees the stars put out one by one until only the morning star is left, gleaming like a diamond against the pale green sky, and suspended perhaps above precipices of crystal snow and tawny rock so mighty and yet so delicate that they seem the very ramparts of fairyland. He sees some white still dome of snow bathed in transparent silver by the peering beams of light that touch the hills before the sun is aloft in the sky; and when the beams reach his level, he sees his own shadow flashed on the whiteness beside him in tones of sapphire more pure and ethereal than a dragon fly's wings. To him is unfolded minute by minute each wondrous stage of the magic of turning night into day among the mountains.

It seldom happens, however, that the prospect of dawn is vouchsafed to him as part of the view from the summit of his peak. He associates the sunrise with the labours of the long ascent. This, then, must be my apology for writing of one more sunrise, supremely beautiful, and

seen from a position so rare for a human being to be in at such an hour that I can hardly credit the magnificent fortune which ordained that we should step on to the summit of our mountain precisely as the sun was gathering its rays behind the eastern horizon in order to flood the Alps from end to end with light.

Amongst the few summits of the Alps which are still but rarely trodden of the ubiquitous mountaineer is that of the white-winged peak which soars above the pine-woods of the Lognon and the snows of the Grands Montets, breaking in glory on the climber's vision when he gets his first free view of the valley of Chamonix. The Aiguille Verte yielded first to the persuasions of Whymper in the same summer that saw the surrender of the Matterhorn—that glorious summer of 1865 when every morning brought news of a fresh Alpine victory. Since then it has acquired a somewhat dark, and therefore alluring, fame in the annals of mountaineering. Various ways have been forced to the summit, but they are all exceptionally long and difficult, and exposed to the risk of evil weather. The famous ice couloir or broad ravine by which Whymper ascended and which bears his name, although the shortest and least severe, has the counter-balancing attribute of being dangerously open to falling stones. Indeed, the old weather prophets of the valley have a proverb which shows “the Verte” as a sort of puissant king-maker of the Alps, bending even the monarch of mountains to its will. “Quand la Verte veut, le Mont Blanc ne peut,” they say. It happens, occasionally, however, that the climate of the Alps indulges in a freak season unclassified by the pundits of

mountain weather. In such a season it may occur that after a long spell of bad weather ice climbs like the Whymper couloir are covered deeply with snow. Normally, such climbs are very long, and for the leading man extraordinarily arduous, owing to the labour of wielding an ice-axe to cut steps in ice for hours at a time. They are also dangerous, for they are apt to be swept in the heat of the day by every variety of mountain missile, and, thanks to the length of time required to negotiate them, it is difficult to ensure being down and off the mountain before the zenith sun has begun its evil work. But when the ice is smothered in snow there is a different story. Most of the steps may be quickly kicked, and even where this is not feasible, it is a comparatively light effort to slice steps in snow. The time is therefore speeded up, and a party may be reasonably sure of getting out of harm's way before the mountain begins its catapult practice.

These conditions occurred in the season of which I write, and to our delight it became clear about the middle of August that the great couloir would "go" with quite unusual ease and safety. In order to make sure of sunless hours for the descent, we strapped on our crampons at midnight in the Couvercle hut and passed into the outer dark, possessed of the grizzly temper that commonly besets the mountaineer turning out at such an hour. Tightly packed on the hut mattresses, for a couple of hours we had sought in vain the sleep that is reputed to dwell amid the lonely hills; a Frenchman who related his deeds of derring-do at great length and in an exasperating whisper having distracted us from the

search. Moreover, by guttering candle-light we had swallowed that nameless meal, illegitimate and unwelcome off-spring of supper and breakfast, which is the climber's portion ere he sets out on his adventures :

On the Alps

It is reported thou didst eat strange food.

The night looked none too good. A warmish breeze was nosing about the mountain side, and there were shreds of watery-looking cloud adrift on the sky, their vaporous shapes faintly illumined by the moon. The lanterns made little lakes of moving light on the snow. It was soft snow, and we trudged onward and upward heavily over the topmost reaches of the Talèfre glacier. Ahead was another party blazing a trail and kicking or cutting steps up the interminable height of the couloir. We came to its mouth, crossed the snow-filled chasm which separated it from the glacier, and began to climb steeply in the snow staircase of the previous party. By the aid of the lantern it was just possible to distinguish the hollows of the steps as blots of darkness against the surrounding grey glimmer of the snow, and so slip one's feet into place. For hours it seemed, we plodded upwards in the dark, straining our eyes to make out accurately the footholds until they smarted with the effort. Sleep, which had spurned us when we entreated, hovered unwanted about us now and combining with the monotony of the ascent produced a sort of coma in which the actions of arms and legs became mechanical. Dim forms of dreamland rose to the sky from their shadowy bases all around us. We seemed to be at the

core of eternal darkness and silence, the latter made more still as silence always is by a single perpetual sound, in this case the noise of the stream in the trench of the couloir sliding over its icy bed. Almost imperceptibly the first forerunning light of the day stole upon us. The lustrous black and grey night died so gradually that it was impossible to observe the degrees of change. It paled to the hue of ashes on the snow, and then a faint wash of colour suffused the sky. We extinguished the lanterns and made ever upwards, now on the snow of the couloir, now scrambling over iced rocks which broke out of its bed. Slowly, we rose towards our first goal, a snow saddle high above on the sky-line made by a depression in the great southern ridge of the mountain which was walling in our horizon. Thence, a short knife-edge of snow or ice would lead us to the summit.

When we were children, a wall too high to see over was an insolent challenge to our ranging desires. I remember how once, after much secret planning, a friend and myself filched a short ladder from the gardener and by its means scaled the garden wall which separated the home ground from a neighbour's demesne. We yearned to see for ourselves that hidden country not, I believe, from any mere prying motive—although authority was not quite so clear on this point when our escapade subsequently became public—but actuated by the essential spirit of exploration, the desire for wider horizons. And I doubt whether even stout Cortez experienced a more authentic thrill of discovery than did we two grubby urchins, precariously perched upon the top of our wall and hauling up the ladder so as to let it down again for

a descent among the flower beds on the other side. Grown-ups and children are not very different in their instinctive longings and pleasures ; and to step on to a pass or ridge and see with one's own eyes that " other side " yields one of the most satisfactory sensations in the climber's experience. It is symbolic, setting at peace, at any rate for the moment, the individual's share of the insatiable craving of the race to know what lies beyond. Our couloir was on the south-western, and therefore at that early hour the darker, face of the mountain. At last we neared the col which severed us from the already lighted east. Its crest of snow was touched with the purest rose colour. From the vantage of the summit ridge we knew that almost every great peak in the Alps would be strung out before our vision, and the sight of the rosy light just lipping over from the east made us surmise something at any rate of the wonder in which we should find them invested. The moment before we actually breasted the barrier which divided our twilight from their day seemed to hang back in expectancy. And then the last step on to the col was taken and we were citizens of a new heaven and a new earth. The old heaven of gloaming sky and cribbed horizon and lustreless snow passed away in one enchanted second and left us possessors of a transfigured universe. The sun was not yet above the distant margin of the earth and the eastern sky was banded above the verge with a broad curtain of glowing red, pure as the colour at the heart of a furnace, but deeper and more gentle. In front of this curtain and along the curve of the verge were ranged the peaks of the distant Bernese Oberland and the Valais.

We saw their western precipices untouched still by the sun, and their covering of ice and snow had a pale green sheen and seemed translucent. It was as if a range of fantastic Chinese sculptures in jade had been set against a background of mellow eastern silk, coral-hued and shimmering. I write "it was as if," and yet I am painfully aware that no simile of my invention can convey the quality and colour of those distant peaks against the sky, the effluence of immensity and cold strength which issued from them, strangely combined with an illusion, induced by their distance and yet visibly delicate detail of chiselling, that they were Lilliputian Alps, called to life by the art perhaps of a medallist. Every shape was familiar although weirdly reduced in scale. We hailed the Eiger and the Jungfrau, the Finsteraarhorn and the Bietschorn, and in the nearer Valais, the Dent Blanche and the Matterhorn and the swinging curves of the Mischabelhörner. But we recognised them as one might recognise the faces of friends in some adventure in fairyland. Intervening between these distant horizon ranges and the tall summit on which we stood was a wild system of peaks and valleys cleft by the great trench of the Rhône and dominated in the middle distance by the Grand Combin. The Combin stands solitary, surrounded on every side by deep valleys which rise to passes that are generally free from snow in summer. All these valleys were still unilluminated and shadows and mist lay over them like a sea through which the tips of their boundary hills appeared like islets. In the midst the Combin arose, icy and massive and pale, its cliffs and snowfields still bathed in that translucent sea-green light.

It was very cold on the summit of the Aiguille Verte, and for six hours we had had nothing to eat except a casual bite of chocolate. We stamped our feet and flapped our hands and draped ourselves in sweaters and scarves ; and I confess that for a few minutes my attention was distracted from the unfolding of the dawn by the difficult task of forcing stale bread and butter down a throat that seemed constricted by the chilling and rarefied air. Someone, however, who had been divinely inspired during the last shopping expedition in Chamonix, produced a tin of preserved pineapple, and its juice, acting like some rich sweet lubricant, eased the way for the rough food to follow. The owner of the preserved pineapple has the undying gratitude of at least one member of the party clustered on the small crown of the Verte that August morning. By its delicious aid I quickly got sufficient fuel under hatches to make energy for the descent and was free to attend again to the gorgeous east. In the short interval the sun had topped the horizon. Behind the peaks of Valais it seemed to poise for a moment on the rim of the world. It was like an immense fire opal diffusing a million beams of crimson and vermilion light. And then the opal became a topaz, and the beams broadened and lengthened until it seemed as if the Dent Blanche and the Matterhorn were set against a background of pale and liquid flame. The primrose-coloured flame quickly increased in brilliance and became concentrated, and we saw that the sun would shortly attain the dazzling light of day. We turned towards the western and southern sector of the earth, where the beautiful battle between night and morning

was still in progress. Morning held silver sway over the snows of Mont Blanc, which curve upwards from the valley of the Arve like the swelling bosom of some queen of fable. It seemed as if no breath of air stirred there to ruffle those smooth contours. But night was still lord of the valley, muting the green of alp and pinewood to a quiet harmony. We gazed down for thousands of feet on to the broken bases of the mountains, where they fall away to the meadows, and we saw the shadow of the Aiguille Verte projected far beneath us. It was absolutely symmetrical, shaped like a titanic isosceles triangle with an acute angle at the apex, and it lay athwart the hills and dales without a dint or tremor on its even edges and surface. I suppose that had we been able to watch long enough, we should have witnessed the progress of this shadow across the Alps in a manner parallel to that of the shadow described by Stephen in his essay on the sunset from Mont Blanc. The difference must have been that the gigantic finger of the sundial on which we stood would have shrunk instead of lengthening as it curved round to point the hours marked by imagination upon the mountains. We were cold, however, and time pressed, for there was always the thought at the back of our minds of the unpleasantness of being caught in the Whymper couloir in full sunshine. One more ranging glance round the immense circumference that was revealed had therefore to suffice. We saw the Lake of Geneva, a patch of quivering grey caught in the folds of hazy mountains, and the strange tawny cliffs of the Diablerets rising out of the dark green highlands towards the north ; and then the eyes, roving across the eastern

quadrant which was less magical now that the sun was in full power, came to rest over Italy. The southern highlands were coloured deep with rich blue greens and ruddy browns that flowed together and were softened by the lingering mists. The clouds were still tinted with the pale copper reflections of dawn, and on the white wastes of the Gran' Paradis and on the Grivola, high above the tangled ranks of snow-free peaks, there was a flush of colour which might have been distilled from fallen beech leaves. In the most dim distance, cloud and hill seemed inextricably mingled, and perhaps it was only the eye of faith that distinguished the mountains of Dauphiné.

That night, lying peacefully abed at the Montanvert—when the tourists cease from troubling and the climbers are at rest—I tried to visualise and express to myself in words the scene I have here attempted to describe. It was humbling to find that misty passages had already crept into the mental picture and that, even where memory was bright and true, no words that I could discover seemed adequate to body it forth. It was as if the spirit of beauty had taken us into a high mountain apart and afterwards sealed our lips. And yet, such a scene is revealed in its fullest significance only in retrospect when there is leisure to dwell on it in memory and fit it against the background of the rest of life. In this way the vision of dawn from the summit of the Aiguille Verte swept to its place as the climax and completion of every sight of beauty that had gone before. It seemed as if everything else had been planned by some outside agent for a deliberate preliminary training of the receptive faculties. Sunrise over the river Loire and across

the Coolin hills of Skye, these took their parts quietly in a scheme of progress, essential but self-forgetful fore-runners sent to prepare the way. A sense of finality stole into one's mind. A consummation had been reached and could never be striven for any more. And with this feeling came an odd illusion that the normal grasp on life was slackened. It would have seemed quite appropriate and by no means unkindly had one's hold given way like a fruit falling from its stalk, a fruit hanging above a river and dropping to plunge into the broad, deep water and be borne away out of knowledge and sight for ever.





AN ENGLISH HUMORIST

LATE one afternoon in the autumn of 1860, Edwin Waugh, the Lancashire poet, and a friend of his, who were tramping in the Lake country, set out from Gatesgarth at the foot of the Honister Pass to walk over Scarf Gap and Black Sail to Wasdale. They had intended hiring a guide, but none were at liberty, so they undertook this adventurous passage by themselves, were caught by mists and heavy gusts of rain, waded the Liza and the boggy ground in the bed of Ennerdale, toiled up Black Sail and finally, wet through but greatly relieved at the safe termination of their adventure, walked in at the kitchen door of the Huntsman's Inn at Wasdale Head just as night was blotting out the huge mountain forms enclosing the valley. The warm room, scented and misty with tobacco smoke and half revealed by fire-flames gleaming through the haze, must have seemed extraordinarily hospitable to these late comers. A maid was about to set candles on a long table for supper; and

seated about the room waiting for their meal was a little company whose odd assortment delighted Waugh's shrewd sense of character when he settled down to enjoy it. There was an officer of the Ordnance Service in "military undress." Survey work had probably sent him to Wasdale. There was Jackson, the Borrowdale guide and shoe-maker, who had brought a client over the Styhead Pass that evening. There was Willie the Waller, a stout young fellow who swung backwards and forwards on the hinder legs of his chair while he smoked. He was a stone-mason and a "gay good hand at levellin' rough lumps of cheese." There was Crowner, a youthful foxhound, and Boy, the sheep-dog. And sitting on a low chair beside the hearth, engaged just then in countering the teasing caresses of his small son, there was William Ritson, host and mentor and story-teller to the company. Ritson's name has already been mentioned in these pages; and no friend of Cumberland could wish a more fascinating occupation than that of trying to model his portrait.

Waugh and his friend were storm-bound next day, and they spent a good part of their time before the kitchen fire listening to the rattle of repartee between Ritson and his cronies and the jolly stories which they clapped down one against the other like a children's game of pat-a-cakes. Jackson told a tale about a dalesman whom they called the Newland Dwarf, "a girt strang stark-like fellow." "He was sea tall that he yance turned a' t' public hoose seegns i' Keswick t' wrang way about i' t' neet-time. Dan, t' policeman, was sent t' tek him up; but he didn't like o't job, for he knew t' dwarf was a dangerous chap t'

me'll on, an' he mud happen git his licks, reet off-hand. Sea Dan went cannily aboot it; an' when he fand him drinkin' in a public hoose, he whispered tull him in a friendly way what he was aboot. Well, t' dwarf happened t' be in a good temper; an' he axed Dan if he wud hev a glass afoore they started. Dan said he wud, an' he was varra glad, too. For Dan was awlus a good takker. But this time he teuk an' teuk glass after glass till he was clean dune up; an' what does t' dwarf do but whips t' handcuffs on poor Dan, an' turns him oot o' doors."

"Aye," said Ritson. "Aa've heeard Adam Tyson tell on him." And without a pause: "Noo Adam was annudder queer-like chap. He was an aad guide, gen'elmen, that use't t' be here. Whinivver Passon Hodgkinson an' his wife cam' up t' Wasdale Head in a boat, they wud hev aad Adam wi' them an' neaboddy else. Ye see he cud spin a lang yarn aboot a thing and he was cant an' comical. Well, as ye come up Wastwater here's places where there's good echoes, an' Adam havin' a strang voice t' passon wud hev him t' shout for t' echo—so he shouted 'A—dam' varra loud an slow an' t' echo answert 'A—dam'! Well, one day he was shoutin' for t' passon an' his wife as usual 'A—dam,' an' aad Robert Briggs happened t' be upo' t' crags an' he called oot 'Here am I.' T' passon was quite surprised, till Adam tellt him that it varra ofens did so when it was in a good humour."

When suitable intervals occurred, Waugh would draw his host out to speak of the famous men of letters who had visited Wasdale Head. De Quincey and Words-

worth, for instance, had wandered many a day over the fells accompanied by Ritson, who was incidentally a fine mountain guide—I say, incidentally, because his accomplishments were manifold and various—and Professor Wilson, or Christopher North, author of the wild *Noctes*, as we think of him more readily, cut a boisterous and heroic figure in the annals of the dale. Ritson never tired of gleefully recounting this favourite's extravagances.

Any time during the previous ten years or the succeeding twenty this sort of scene might greet the traveller turning in towards evening to Ritson's house in Wasdale. There would be the jovial fire playing pranks with the brass-work in the kitchen and making an apex of light whose base merged into the dark brown velvet darkness of the corners. There would be the fell-siders, three or four of them smoking their pipes, "girt strang" fellows who had drifted in to hear canny words of wisdom from the robustious oracle of Wasdale Head. And Dinah, Ritson's wife, would be flitting to and fro at her cooking; and perhaps the parson of the tiny church would drop in—he generally seems to have made one, for companionship's sake, at these fireside convivial gatherings. And in the eighteen-seventies, last decade of Ritson's lordship in Wasdale, there would likely be added to these a little group of rock-climbers with faces aglow in the firelight with fresh won health and energy; men whose doing on the crags Ritson half admired and half affected to distrust, but whose frank delight in his stories and pungent chaff recommended them as the best of guests and audiences.

It is to them that we of a younger generation are

indebted for the vivid portrait that we can make of Ritson in our minds. They jotted down their impressions of him in climbing journals. They treasured up his sayings and recounted them so liberally that he has gained a breadth and permanence of fame of which, alive though he most certainly was to his degree of success with his audience, he can never have dreamed. He runs close with John Peel, who was also a "Cummerlan" man, for the honour of being the most interesting character that the fellsides have moulded. Perhaps the huntsman was the more romantic figure. Ritson, it must be admitted, cannot claim to have inspired an immortal song. But his was the wider and more versatile personality. He seems richly to have combined all the attributes, physical and mental, which we are wont to associate with the virile stock of the fells. He was a fine huntsman himself, and in his youth twice held official post as huntsman to local gentlemen. Indeed, he loved the stout, rough and tumble chase on foot across the fells so ardently that when he was landlord of the Huntsman's Inn he kept his own pack of hounds and handled them, it is said, most adeptly. Years later, when he was lying on his death-bed—he had retired from innkeeping in his old age and lived at Nicol Ground in Nether Wasdale, where he died in 1890—he heard that the Blackcombe beagles were hunting the neighbourhood. Perhaps the loud croon of the hounds finding scent and the blare of the huntsman's horn burst into the gloomy silence of the room where he was lying, which must have seemed so repellent to his vigorous spirit, swept in to comfort him with their wild exuberance of sound. At any rate, he was

all for trying to get up and off immediately lest he should lose a moment's sight of the run.

Ritson was a wrestler, too, like every true son of the Lake country, and had won many belts in his youth. And, as the Swiss chamois hunter whose pursuit took him into perilous places was said to make the coolest and most skilled of Alpine guides, so Ritson's practice on the fells as shepherd and fox-hunter taught him to play Raphael to the Tobias of cautious tourists and to become the confidant and adviser and sometimes companion of the bolder spirits who tramped unguided. He went to the foot of the Pillar Rock with Baumgartner, when the latter made one of the early ascents and was given the adventurer's watch and purse and a note to keep for himself if Baumgartner failed to come back. He could quickly gauge of what stuff his visitors were made. One Christmastide two young men, who were spending their holiday tramping in the Lakes, asked for directions as to the Black Sail track. They had to make two passes before dark in order to reach Buttermere, had no map and were short of time. Ritson pointed out to them the farm-yard gate and the track emerging from it, and that was all the information he was prepared to vouchsafe. "I'll tell ye nea more," he said, "for ye doan't leuk soort as'd git lost."

During those thirty odd wonder-working years when he was king in Wasdale, he does not seem to have altered much in the look which he wore to visitors. Waugh introduces him as a "very tall, stark man about sixty," and again writes of him as a "hale old man." Mr. Haskett-Smith, sketching Wasdale as it was fifteen to twenty years

later, describes him as tall, gaunt and bony, and calls him "Auld Will"—a designation, whether affectionate or descriptive, which he seems to have had since his prime. He was, in fact, born in 1808, so that Waugh who, visited Wasdale in 1860, overshot his age by about eight years, an easy error to make, considering the wear and tear of weathering which usually ages the fell-sider's face. The photograph which hangs now in the dining-room of the Westwater Hotel shows him as a typical elderly fell-sider; big and broad-shouldered and tough, with long arms and muscular hands, and a quiet, strong face, whose hardy modelling, particularly about the mouth and nostrils and eyes, is clearly emphasised by the action of wind and rain and sun, those brave artists who fashion alike mountains and the men who live among them.

The long arms—they were apparently quite unusually long—were a source of especial pride to him. It is related that in moments of exuberance he used to exhibit their length by shooting them out horizontally and then bending his body right and left so that first one hand and then the other nearly touched the ground. When this exercise was rapidly performed he must have looked like a caricature of a Dutch windmill in a hurricane; and on those grotesque sails Mr. Haskett-Smith has hung a tale of him.

Ritson had little love in his stout heart for timorous and under-vitalised townsfolk, and on a certain occasion a wagonette discharged a party composed of such persons before his door. All wandered off to see the view of Scafell and Great Gable except one, and he, overtaken apparently by an excess of timidity, did not venture

beyond the inn yard. He was a narrow-chested thin little fellow and wore a frock-coat turned brown with age and a top hat. Ritson, who had been priming up in the bar and was feeling thoroughly exhilarated, suddenly came out of the door and, hatless and in his shirtsleeves, began to execute his war dance. Windmill-wise, he bore down upon the meagre excursionist shouting "Art a russler?" in his broadest dialect. It was quite within Ritson's capacity to cut his Cumberland speech according to his tourist, and the breadth of it is said to have varied more than a little from occasion to occasion. The excursionist was well-nigh paralysed with horror at this towering nightmare vision, but fortunately perhaps for him he misunderstood the Cumbrian inquiry and thought he was being mistaken for an ostler. "N—n—no, Sir," he stammered, "I think I saw him over there," and as he pointed to the stable, he happened to move slightly to one side. That was his salvation. Ritson clawed at him, embraced air, and was several yards down the lane before he could recover his balance.

He did not always use physical force to show his contempt for the town-bred. More often he preferred to score by his wit. There was the cockney, for instance, who in a rash moment spoke somewhat disparagingly of Wasdale Head.

"Fancy living here all your life. Why don't you come up to London and see the sights?" he said to Ritson.

"Ah, m' lad," came the dartlike rejoinder, "theer's nea 'cashion for us t' cum up t' Lunnon t' see t' seets, 'cos sum o' t' seets cums doon here t' see us."

On another occasion (Mr. Seatree tells) how a London tourist was watching Ritson trying to coax a few trout to his fly from the beck behind the hotel. "Mr. Ritson," said the tourist, perhaps facetiously, perhaps in the innocent and disinterested pursuit of knowledge, "what do these little fishes live on in the winter?"

Now Ritson, in common with most primitive and self-taught persons, seems to have been almost morbidly sensitive to the fear that anyone should get an intellectual rise out of him, and he was not quite clear as to the stranger's intentions. To have one's leg pulled by a contemptible cockney of all men was an intolerable idea. Like other masters in the art of war, military or verbal, he considered that to attack was the best method of defence.

"Well," he said, "thoo knaas we git a lot o' visitors here i' t' summer time, maistly fra t' sooth, an' they gah t' dook an' wesh theirsels up i' t' ghyll. Well, they're aboot as loosey as whelps an' t' laal fishes catches t' fleas an' leeves on 'em i' t' winter."

When he was not engaged in any other of his diverse pursuits, Ritson ran the farm which belonged to his house, Rowfoot. He was a good farmer, shrewd and hard-working, and he owned his farm, for he came of a family of "statesmen," as were called in the local system of land tenure the free proprietors who farmed their own land. His wife's people—the Fletchers of Nether Wasdale—were also "statesmen." They had owned land in the valley for seven hundred years. Ritson got his land from his grandfather, and before he inherited it he had worked on it as farmer's boy and shepherd. Farming

the dale in those times must have been a rougher business even than it is to-day. The great piles of stones cleared from the green meadows of the valley bed are evidence of the industry which at one time or another made the land cultivatable. A generation before Ritson's had to fight wild cats and martins and eagles—the last were quite common, far too common for the farmers' liking, and a rope was kept in Borrowdale by subscription, and passed round from dale to dale, so that men might be let down from the crags in the nesting season to rob the eggs. In Ritson's own time the farmstead must have been sufficiently remote from shops and manufactures to force it to be practically independent. To-day, with a macadamised road to connect Wasdale with the seaward plains and a motor-car to meet the visitor at the railway station of his choice, it is hard to picture the self-contained and primitive life that the old dalesmen must have led. After there had been a big sheep-killing and before the winter set in a supply of candles would be made at home for the dark months. Hams of mutton might be smoked over the great peat fire as well as the familiar hams of pork. Butter would be salted down in summer and put away in tubs for winter use. Haver-meal or oatmeal would be stored in the warm cupboard beside the kitchen fire. Across the fire, working somewhat like a crane, there would be an iron shaft from which pots were suspended. When you wanted to bake—the generous north-country fruit cakes for instance—you put the lid tight on the pot and then lowered it into the fire and covered it with peat embers.

Amusements—over and above the jovial gatherings at

Rowfoot—must have been pretty well limited to rare occasions, such as the Hiring Fair at Gosforth. During the fair-time, labourers who wished for employment used to stand about the market square in groups exhibiting the tools of their craft, shepherds with crooks, dairy-maids with pails, and carters cracking whips. There were four public-houses giving on to the square, and a dancing hall was fixed up in each ; and all afternoon and evening the noise of fiddles and scraping clapping feet would mingle with the hubbub of the hiring outside in the market.

It was evidently in those early days that Ritson struck up his friendship with Christopher North, for North lost the use of one hand about 1840 and can hardly have been up to his wild pranks after that accident. He was three-and-twenty years Ritson's senior and a fine wrestler, well known in the Westmorland and Cumberland rings. Ritson and he had one famous tussle together, and Ritson threw him twice out of three falls. He had to admit, however, that the "Professor was a varra hard un t' lick." But when they tried jumping, the Professor beat Ritson. North could jump twelve yards in three long jumps with a big stone in either hand, but Ritson could only jump eleven and three-quarters. They also "put the stone" together, but tradition does not record which was the winner at that pastime. The Professor was obviously Ritson's favourite among the literary men who visited Wasdale Head. Wordsworth, for instance, he dismissed somewhat contemptuously as a "varra quiet-like aad man, who had nea pride aboot him an' varra laal t' say." Wordsworth generally seems to have

made a poor figure in the eyes of his fellside compatriots, who were much too hearty for him and not in the least grateful for the solemn and beautiful aura which he cast over their characters. But North was a hero. He "banged them all for fun an' was a gay girt-hearted fellow as strang as a lion and as lish as a trout, an' sech antics as man nivver had." Of that extraordinary double-sided personality, evidently the half that was Kit North, author of the extravagant revelry of the *Noctes*, came to Wasdale, while John Wilson, sentimental poet and romancer, stayed at home. With Ritson, it was a case of deep calling unto deep. The Professor's outbursts of lusty horse humour delighted him; and he did not trouble himself about the occasional rawness of the Professor's jokes. Indeed, he resembled North, in that his own overflow of vitality at times impaired the quality of his wit and made it crude and even ponderous.

North was a strong swimmer, and on one occasion he made some of the dalesmen row him out on the lake. When they were well away from shore he deliberately fell overboard, having explained beforehand that he was subject to giddy fits and should he topple backwards into the water they must take great care of him. There was a fine commotion. "T' Professor's i' t' watter! T' Professor's i' t' watter!" they yelled, and made desperate efforts to get hold of him. But North bobbed and ducked deftly and eluded his would-be rescuers, setting them in a great state of alarm; until finally one of them got him round the neck and hauled him without ceremony into the boat. He was then discovered to be "snurkin' an' laughin' all t' time." On another occasion

he organised sports, of which Ritson bore delighted recollection. "Then he giddert up my gran'fadder an' Thomas Tyson an' Isaac Fletcher an' Jwosep Stable an' aad Robert Grieve an' some more. Then there was russlin' for buckskin breeks, gurnin' for 'baccy through a horse collar, and nowt wad sarra but t' Professor was t' russle t' champion at t' conclusion o' t' spsports. There was a gay deed amang them, you may be sure. It was a' life an' mirth amang us as lang as Professor Wilson was at Wasdale Head!" Most of Ritson's reminiscences of Professor Wilson seem to have ended with this tribute. It was the refrain to his paean of the lusty days gone by.

In the Professor's day, Rowfoot was merely a rather primitive farmhouse. Visitors who ventured over the Styhead Pass usually made Strands, at the foot of the lake, their base or their objective, as the case might be. But as the century advanced, tourists began to penetrate to Wasdale Head more freely and sometimes wished to put up there instead of sleeping and dining at Strands. For instance, in a quotation I have seen from the 1844 edition of Otley's *Guide*, the writer remarks that "a public-house is much wanted, the kind hospitality of the inhabitants being not infrequently drawn upon by strangers, but it is expected that a licence to entertain travellers will shortly be obtained by one of the house-holders." But in the 1827 edition of the same guide, there is no reference at all in the description of Wasdale to the unsatisfied needs of the tourist's inner man. We are merely told that :

Wasdale Head comprised a level area of about 400 acres of arable land divided by stone walls into small irregular

fields, which have been cleared with great industry and labour. . . . Here, six or seven families have their chapel of a size proportionate to the number of inhabitants and in a style according with the situation.

To accommodate visitors, Ritson and his wife Dinah had a wing built on to the farm. They did not, however, succeed in getting their licence, whereby Rowfoot was metamorphosed into the Huntsman's Inn, until somewhere about 1856.

The licence was long withheld, but it is hardly to be credited that before its grant the hearty fellows who made up Ritson's fireside parties went altogether dry. Kit North, for instance, was scarcely the man to boggle at a little quiet doing behind the exciseman's back. There are persistent traditions of smuggling in the dale. Moses' Trod, the queer track which runs from Wasdale over the shoulder of Great Gable, and contouring about the head of Ennerdale finally links up with Honister Crag, is commonly thought to be a smugglers' path. It has been established, however, beyond reasonable doubt that the primary purpose of this track was for pack ponies bringing slates from the Honister quarries to Wasdale. You can still find strips of slate strewn along its course. Whether smuggling really fulfilled a secondary purpose must be left to the historical conscience of the individual. Ritson used to tell that it did. He alleged that as a boy he could remember an old man they called Moses who used to come over the Trod with a pony and who was the first man who brought slates to Wasdale Head. He brought slates, but he also brought bottles of whisky, made in an illicit still at

the quarries from the bog water which he got from the big moss up behind Honister Crag. Ritson averred that Moses used to hide and store the liquor at Wasdale Head in one of the great heaps of stones cleared from the meadows. Sometimes, old Moses would get caught and taken before the magistrate. And the magistrate would be very severe with him and fine him and take away his worm. But Ritson's story went that when the row had blown over, the magistrate would secretly give the old man back his distilling tools because he made such good whisky. Old Moses can hardly have lasted much beyond Ritson's youth. But it is not very fanciful to suppose that before the licence forced him into respectability he may have been in touch with some unsanctified source of supply. At any rate, on one occasion he was fined twenty pounds for providing spirits. The local exciseman's wife had visited Rowfoot, and while she was there suddenly became ill. She begged Dinah to restore her with spirits, and Dinah, who was a kindly soul that thought no evil, produced the forbidden stuff. But the illness was a feint, and the exciseman's wife merely a shabby spy, and when she got home she informed against the Ritsons. I have often wondered whether it is the family memory of this old mean trick played by the officials of the law which made a later hostess of Wasdale Head tell me with evident pleasure how two policemen, sweating in their hot uniforms after a strenuous search over the fells for some missing tourist, came down to the inn "between hours" and calling for a drink were met with an adamant refusal. "For y' never know," she said to me.

In the traditional combination of local pundit and host of the village inn, Ritson obviously enjoyed himself enormously—one might doubt whether life or fiction have ever created a character to fit the part better. But it was the ruddy glow of full-blooded wit and humour with which he lighted his various talents that chiefly won him his reputation. Setting those two old Cumberland worthies, John Peel and William Ritson, side by side, let us allow John Peel to have been a doyen of English huntsmen and claim for Ritson the same title among English humorists. But when I write of English humour, it is English folk humour that I have in mind; the roystering healthy sense of a ridiculous situation for which Shakespeare was catering when he wrote the buckbasket scene in the *Merry Wives of Windsor*; the delight in riddles and a verbal triumph which inspired the old ballad of King John and the Archbishop of Canterbury and his Shepherd; the zest for smacking repartee which runs through Thomas Heywood's play of *The Foure PP.* This sort of humour is "of the soil," as we say. It has a good deal in common with children's laughter at the antics and retorts of the clown in a pantomime or the puppets at a Punch and Judy show. But it bears no resemblance to the sophisticated and polished wit of a man like Congreve, for example; or to the irony of Jane Austen; or to the lambent flashes that unexpectedly leap out every now and then to sting us from the pages of W. S. Gilbert. These, for better or worse, wear the livery of education and civilisation, but folk humour is gloriously independent of such trappings of the natural man. Never altering with the times, it has descended through the

generations of the Anglo-Saxon race direct from those dim days before England was England, when our forebears from beyond the North Sea evolved robust and gleeful stories concerning the Gods of Asgard, tales most wholesome and refreshing to remember as a foil to Greek mythology, where the gods seem always to be taking themselves *au grand sérieux*—like a minor Government official in France or Italy. It is fascinating to observe how neatly a character like Ritson fits into this genealogy. Take the case of his famous “lees.” They were, as a rule, just wild and glorious exaggerations of fact thrown out to dazzle and amuse an audience, or as a defence against getting his leg pulled, or to take down a superior person who might have made what he conceived to be a stupid remark, or one perhaps derogatory to Wasdale Head. There was the tourist, for instance, of whom the Rev. John Hodgson tells. He was discussing the sights of the dale with Ritson and remarked: “I am surprised to see there are no headstones in the churchyard.”

“What for should there be any headstones?” said Ritson.

“Why, of course, to mark where people are buried.”

“But theer is neaboddy buried theer.”

“Why, what do you do with the people when they die?” said the tourist, beginning to get mystified.

“Neaboddy nivver does die here.” Ritson held his ground, marking time.

“Then what becomes of them?”

Ritson delivered his knock-out blow: “They leev here till they’re varra aad, an’ then they wither an’ wither, an’ at last they git that thin t’ wind just blows them away.”

A "lee" of this kind takes us straight back to the early sixteenth century. It is the base of the wit already alluded to in *The Four PP*. Dabblers in pre-Elizabethan literature will remember the sly plot; how Heywood makes a Palmer, a Pardoner and a 'Pothecary who meet in an ale-house wrangle together as to which is most necessary for sending men to heaven, the 'pothecary to speed them with his drugs, the pardoner to sell them forgiveness, or the palmer to point them the path of penance. Enter unto these three a pedlar, who joins in the argument and is finally appointed to judge which has the most worth according to which shall tell the "girstest lee" as Ritson would have put it. They start off with a beautiful rapier thrust on the part of the 'pothecary. It is the palmer who gets pinked.

Palmer : . . . Now, say thy worst ;
Now, let us hear of all thy lies,
The greatest lie thou mayst devise,
And with the fewest words thou can—

'Pothecary : . . . Forsooth, ye be an honest man !

After that, the 'pothecary and the pardoner both invent fantastic stories growing gigantically in impossibility to their climax. Then the palmer begins, quite quietly :

Not one good city, town or borough
In Christendom, but I have been through ;
And this I would ye should understand,
I have seen women five hundred thousand
And oft with them have long time tarried,
Yet in all places where I have been,
Of all the women that I have seen,
I never saw nor knew in my conscience
Any one woman out of patience.

The comments come like lightning :

'Pothecary : By the Mass ! There is a great lie.

Pardoner : I never heard a greater. By Our Lady !

Pedlar : A greater ! Nay, know ye any so great ?

This delight in piling Pelion on Ossa of extravagance and then perhaps capping the whole by a seemingly innocent remark very slyly introduced and which the audience has to admit as the most extravagant of any corresponds in its turn with the humour of the old Norse folk tales. There is, for example, the story of Boots (in Scandinavian folk stories, the youngest and despised son of the family is always called Boots) and the Princess who drew such a long bow when she talked and told so many lies that the King, her father, gave out that if any man could cure her by getting her to say "That's a lie!" he should have her to wife. Now the two elder brothers of Boots had their trial and both, it need scarcely be related, failed. Then Boots came into the field and played the Princess's vanity like a fisherman with a salmon on his line :

"At our house," he said, "we have an ox that is so big that a man seated on one horn and blowing a mountain trumpet cannot be heard by a man seated on the other horn."

"Well, you haven't our milk," replied the Princess. "We milk into huge pails and carry them indoors and empty them into great tubs and then we make monster cheeses."

"Well, we milk our cows into the great tubs. And we put them into a cart to drive indoors and then we turn the tubs into brewing vats and the cheeses are as big as a house. And we have a dun mare to tread the cheese.

Once she got lost. And we ate at the cheese for seven years and then we came upon the dun mare and she was alive and kicking. And once, when I was driving her to the mill, her backbone snapped ; so I put in a spruce sapling. But the sapling grew into such a tall tree that I was able to climb to heaven on it. And there was the Virgin Mary spinning foam into pig's bristle ropes. But suddenly the spruce sapling broke. So they let me down on a rope ; and I slipped straight into a fox's hole and who should I see there but my mother and your father cobbling shoes, and just as I slipped in, my mother gave your father such a box on the ear that it made his whiskers curl."

Then the Princess flashed out : " That's a lie ! "

I cannot resist capping this Norse story with one, most surprisingly like it at some points, which Ritson lifted from another Cumbrian raconteur and used to tell himself whenever a suitable occasion offered. Such a chance came one day when a dalesman, who had dropped into the hospitable kitchen, reeled off a tall yarn about some huge vegetable he had read of in the local newspaper. When he had finished, Ritson took up his tale with becoming gravity :

" O, that was nowt tull a crop o' turmets 'at was grown aboot twenty years sen by Clem Mossop o' Prior Skeal, near Co'der Brig. It's guddish grund theer, an' what wid that, an' heavy muckin' an' wide thinnin' oot, he raised sech turmets as nivver was heerd tell on ayder afoore or sen—they were sea big. Foak cum fra a' parts t' leuk at them ; an' aboot Martimas a young bull fairly eat his way intull yan of them, as a moose mud intull a cheese an' bead theer. They thowt t' beast was lost till a while after Kermas, whin he woakt oot o't a gay bit fatter ner he went in. Clem was sea plees't he had t'

skoll o' t' turmet carried yeme, an't meade a famish hen hull—t' hens a' sat in't at neet—while next winter, an' then it soffent an' fell t' gidder efter a hard frost."

The Norse folk stories are rooted deep in the yet older Norse mythology. Christianity must have seemed a somewhat emaciated religion to imaginations which had been fed on the robust and crowded hagiology of the Gods of Asgard ; and the Norsemen, officially bereft of their gods, followed the sensible course adopted by all the Western nations and kept them on unofficially as the disguised heroes of their folk literature. The humour of the folk tales, then, goes right back to the dim age when the stories of the gods were being gradually beaten into form. By the time it has reached back to those remote days, it is a fairly primitive humour, but perfectly authentic. Comicality, and irony too, sometimes, bubble up from the Norse stories like unexpected springs. A quite serious tale of battle and trickery and loss may end, for instance, on a note of roaring farce. Take the tale of Skadi, the giant's daughter, who journeyed to Asgard to avenge her father whom the gods had slain. A deputation of the gods waylaid her, however, outside their boundaries, and it was arranged that she should take compensation instead of bloody vengeance. One of the clauses in the agreement was that the Asa should "do that which she thought they would not be able." And this was to make her laugh. Loki made himself responsible for the execution of this clause, and when Skadi and the gods were assembled in hall, he began to perform a fantastic sort of dance. He twisted and turned and at last he arranged things so that he tripped backwards

in most ungodlike and undignified fashion and subsided on to Skadi's knees. Whereupon she emitted an irresistible guffaw. Can one imagine so flippant a revel occurring among the solemn inhabitants of Olympus as the finale to the usual tale of divine rapine and bloodshed?

Most of the comic interest in the *Prose* or *Younger Edda* strikes fire from the ludicrous contacts of Thor with the race of giants. At home in Asgard, Thor was regarded as the champion of gods and men, and he had a proper pride in his own strength and prowess. But once on a time, in search of adventures, he set off with two or three companions on a journey to the stronghold of the giants. On the way the gods fell in with the giant Skrymir and travelled with him. But when evening came and all were settling down for the night, Thor suddenly made a discovery which caused him to suspect his unknown companion, and he became frightened. So, as soon as the giant slept, he rose up quietly, and taking the great hammer, token of his strength, he swung and brought it down with all his might on Skrymir's skull. To his consternation, the giant awoke quite serenely and merely asked whether a leaf had fallen on him, and whether they had supped and were ready for sleep. Thor answered that they were just going to sleep. But "sooth to say there was no fearless sleeping." Shortly after, Skrymir began to snore, so Thor decided to try his strength again. And "he knows that the head of the hammer sank deep into Skrymir's skull." But Skrymir only turned lazily from one side to the other, and said: "What is't now, fell an acorn on my head, or what's

the news with thee, Thor?" And Thor, trembling, answered that he was but newly awaked. He waited his opportunity, however, and when the giant slept again, he gathered all his strength into a final blow, and the mighty hammer circled round his head and straight and true came crashing down on Skrymir's cheek. Then Skrymir sat up and rubbed his cheek, and said: "Be there any birds sitting in the tree above me?"

This Norse humour and its English succession is almost always founded on deeds rather than words. It pre-supposes a belief in the prime efficacy of doughtiness to win the world—a belief which is to be found in all those national characteristics which we may suppose to be most directly inherited by us from our Scandinavian ancestors. Applied to humour, you get the converse of this belief—the ludicrous incongruity or inadequacy of certain deeds to attain certain ends. You get the scene in the inn yard at Wasdale with a Gargantuan Ritson bearing down upon the absurd little tourist; or Falstaff, the fat and conceited lover, bundled out of harm's way into a soiled linen basket. You get a farcical tale of loss and recovery such as *Gammer Gurton's Needle*. Needles must have been extraordinarily precious in those days of the early sixteenth century judging by the uproar which arose when the Gammer lost hers in the act of mending Hodge's breeches. The cat was within an ace of having its throat slit because someone suggested that it might have swallowed the needle. The neighbours were accused, and the entire population of the village entered the fray. The Gammer was beside herself with worry. Finally, Hodge happened to put on the pair of breeches which had

started the trouble and, sitting down with some decision, discovered with sudden and painful certainty the whereabouts of the needle. To complete the chain of descent, you can choose another story about Thor—say, his drinking wager with the giants. This occurred on the same journey as the adventure with Skrymir related above. Thor and his comrades had arrived in the hall of the giants and were being sorely teased—set to perform all sorts of impossible feats. But when it came to a drinking feat Thor thought that surely he could hold his own. The Gods of Asgard were phenomenal drinkers. He was given a great horn and told that a fellow who pretended to any strength at all should be able to empty it, at any rate, in three draughts. So Thor set his lips to the task and he drank and drank. But when he paused and looked at the contents of the horn it seemed still to be brimful. Twice again he tried, and then he had to admit that he was beaten. It is true that he had made some impression, but there was still ample liquor in the horn. Then the giants jeered at him and discredited his mighty reputation. But when he was departing from their stronghold, one of them—Skrymir, in fact—went a little way with him and told him that it was no wonder he had failed, for the end of the horn was dipped in the sea and he had been set to drink the ocean. Thus, in Thor's draught you have the humorous origin of the ebbing of the tide.

The unrivalled opportunities for conviviality enjoyed by the gods and the heroes who dwelt with them in Valhalla were evidently a source of envy and admiration to the heroes who lived still on earth. For instance,

when Gangleri, who acts in the *Prose Edda* the part of Tommy and Mary in Mrs. Markham's *History of England*, is plying his questions of the gods concerning the constitution of the Norse Universe, he is obviously much perturbed because in a glowing account of the delights of the table in Valhalla no mention at all is made of liquid refreshment. So he asks: "What have the champions to drink that fills them so bountifully as their meat, or is water there drunken?" The reply is beautifully ironical: "Wondrously now askest thou, as if Allfader (observe the "d" instead of "th," a substitution that Ritson would have made in his dialect speech) would bid to him kings and carls and other great men, and would give them water to drink; if there were not better fare to be had there at will, by my troth I wis many of those come to Valhalla who would think they bought their water drink dear."

The sentiment would have appealed poignantly to Ritson. In his youth, the importance of strong liquor had been inculcated carefully into him. There was the instruction, for example, when he and his father stopped for refreshment at the inn at Loweswater. Ritson helped himself to the whisky and then proceeded to charge his father's glass. "Thou mun say when, fadder," said he.

But Old John kept silent. When the spirit was lipping over the brim, Ritson stopped and said: "Thou nivver said when, fadder."

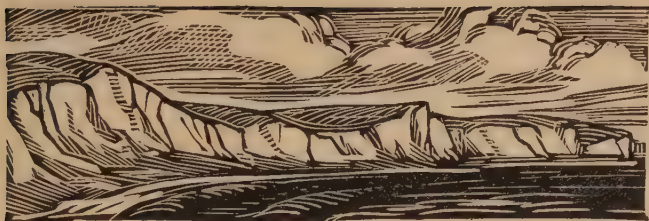
"Nea, Will," was the parental reply; "a lucky man may mak' his fort'n be hoddan his tongue."

We may trace, then, the pedigree of our national sense of humour direct to its foundation in the stock of those

piratical ancestors of ours who crossed the North Sea in fitful gusts of invasion during the rough centuries which followed the withdrawal of the last of the legions to Rome. Ritson's stalwart figure recedes into the mists of those uncharted days. Physically and mentally he could have been comrade to the adventurers from overseas. If we may judge, he was far nearer to them in his admirations and his disdains, his tastes and the things he laughed at—in a phrase, his uncurbed zest for life—than he can ever have been to his contemporaries from the growing towns and the more servile agricultural midlands and south. It is pertinent to remember that the Norse stock was probably transferred to the Lake Country direct from its Scandinavian source without any percolations through Danish or Teutonic sieves. The dialect pronunciation and phraseology, the names of places and of people proclaim an undiluted Scandinavian origin. It would be enough evidence merely to compare a gazeteer and directory of Westmorland and Cumberland with one of modern Norway. Some have thought that the Lake District was colonised by the followers of the Viking Olaf from a base in the Isle of Man. Whether or not that was the case, we shall, perhaps, never know. But somehow and somewhen it is sure that, fresh from Scandinavia, the Norsemen came to Westmorland and Cumberland and brought with them their belief in hard blows and jollity to hold at bay the fear of the inevitably coming twilight of the gods. Ritson must be thought of as one of them. Apart from the fact that he did not die in battle, it is hard to conceive a fitter candidate for the Hall of Odin, or one to whom such a home would have made a

more irresistible appeal. There is, surely, a heroic proportion, a godlike disdain of parsimonious merrymaking in the accounts of those festive evenings at the Huntsman's Inn. Unconsciously, and because it was in his blood, he was trying to keep alive the faith of his forebears—to model Wasdale Head on the lines of a small scale Valhalla with himself as the host of heroes.





CROSSING THE CHANNEL

I SUPPOSE that in these cynical days English children are often taught quite soon in their careers that the history of Europe began some time before the Battle of Hastings, and was not limited in interest through the succeeding centuries to the activities of the English in France. They probably imbibe, too, with an early geography lesson, the even more devastating news that Britain is, physically speaking, a mere appanage of the despised Continent. They will learn that their remote ancestors passed freely from Dover to Calais along a line of chalk hills which divided the head waters of those two great rivers of which the Rhine and the Thames and the Seine were just handsome tributaries. In childish degree they will grasp the giant conception of how the ice, which held imprisoned the great volume of seas farther north, slowly began to melt and recede so that the released waters swept south like a horde of Barbarian invaders, washed up the valleys of the North Sea and English Channel, and gradually battered down from east and west the resistance of the chalk rampart until at last the summits of Dogger's Bank and the Goodwins were submerged and our rough island story began. No doubt it is an admirable thing that the infant mind should be

thus nurtured on scientific truth. I, for one, believe firmly in the well-worn platitude that science is more wonderful than any fairy tale. Yet, I admit to a sneaking thankfulness that my own childhood was passed in days before science invaded the nursery. A heritage of fable is mine which I would not forego on any account. And I feel sorry—quite unnecessarily, no doubt—for the modern child who cannot share it. The best of these fables is the one which grew round the birth of Britain :

When Britain first at Heaven's command
Arose from out the azure main. . . .

I learned by heart. And my small imagination conceived an inspiring vision of Britannia rising like Venus from the waves, leaping from the depths of ocean to her place in the sun in a single moment of time. The dream was most stimulating to insular pride and begat a superb contempt for other nations who could boast of no such spectacular advent.

It is not, however, for reasons of insular pride that I still cling to my childish vision and pity the children who will never be able to dream it. I cling to it in order to distil the maximum savour of romance from a journey abroad. I do not care to think that quite recently, as geological time goes, there was a causeway to the Continent and that even to-day the ruins of it are so near the surface that here and there fishermen run aground on the old hill-tops. It distresses me to know that, in the length of time, I am separated from the Frenchman and the German as precariously as a child who has built a moated castle in the sand and waited for the tide to come

up and flood its trenches and cut it off from the mainland. For going abroad could never yield the same delight if it ceased to be necessary to cross the channel in order to reach a foreign land; if, for example, the tunnel which used to be so much discussed were ever constructed and we got into the train at Victoria and out of the same train at the Gare du Nord. I can imagine few journeys more banal. Nature has evolved only two sorts of frontier that are really adequate. The one is a chain of mountains and the other is the sea. It is only where "mountains divide us and a waste of seas" that the barrier is crisp enough for the peoples on either side of it to develop their personalities unhampered and grow up as self-contained civilisations, peering at each other across the ramparts with curiosity and wonder. The more difference there is between nations the more romance in travelling. Since the greatest fun of going to a foreign country is falling in with foreign ways and thanking God that you are not as other men, not because you consider your ways are necessarily better, but simply because you delight for a while in the novelty of conforming to their different manners. No man-made frontier line can give this sharp sense of separation and difference. Between France and Belgium and Belgium and Holland, for instance, the political line of cleavage may cut clean, but the subtler differences of a people's way of life are blurred at the boundary. But between France and England the differences at the border of either land are as marked as the differences at the countries' hearts. Sussex and Picardy have no more in common than Shropshire and Poitou. For this, we have the Channel

sea to thank. It is the twenty miles of honest salt water which separate Dover from Calais that invest a journey to the Continent with unfading glamour. And I confess that I would rather have sea-water, romance and, if necessary, sea-sickness as concomitants of my journey abroad than save an hour on the time-table and recline at my ease in the corner of a railway carriage while I am carried in an express train with no change between London and Paris.

Nor am I alone in expressing this sentiment. I have distinguished company. In that masterpiece of common sense and cynicism, *The Way of all Flesh*, Samuel Butler allows himself one short excursion into the borderland of rapturous enthusiasm. It is when his hero is crossing the channel. "Don't you love the smell of grease about the engine of a channel steamer?" he makes Ernest Pontifex say to Mr. Overton as the two are crossing by the night mail from Dover. And then: "I always think one of the best parts of going abroad is the first thud of the piston and the first gurgling of the water when the paddle begins to strike it."

Even the most seasoned—or sea-sick—traveller can hardly fail to experience something of this thrill of anticipated adventure when he descends from the train at Dover and sets foot upon the sloping and slippery gangway of the Calais boat. Observe that Ernest Pontifex said: *I always think . . .* Familiarity had not cloyed his pleasure. For those who may be going abroad for the first time the moment must seem tense with excitement, the excitement of voyaging into the unknown beyond. They stand on deck, patiently waiting to precipitate them-

selves into the fairy lands across the strait. They may not look the part, but if the chance presented itself they would almost be prepared to play Christopher Columbus or Captain Cook. But to him for whom the beyond is not wholly unknown, crossing the Channel assumes the nature of a rite. I am certain that Ernest practised it. When the boat is clear of the harbour, he invariably strolls aft and contemplates with a private and satisfying sentimentality the diminishing white cliffs and the receding prospect of Dover town. "Look," says he half aloud as the harbour fades from sight, "there's the last of the Old Lord Warden." And on those words, he faces resolutely about, marches up to the prow and takes up another strategic position, this time leaning on the forward rails. His attention is now transferred ahead where the French coast glimmers along the southern horizon, dreamy blue at first, but slowly gathering substance and colours and seemly contours as the boat threshes her way to Calais. He has the familiar salute of old and tested acquaintance for Cap Griz Nez, like a bluff sentinel posted in the near south-west; and his murmured phrases about the never silent strait and Calais glittering in the sun may be construed into the appropriate quotation from Matthew Arnold.

From the deck of a cross-channel steamer Calais seems to be the focus of Europe. She gathers to herself the lures of a score of nations. And though the thud of the piston when the boat casts off from Dover is indubitably a good part of going abroad, yet an even better part—at least so it seems to me—is concentrated in those five minutes when the vessel is moving alongside Calais pier

and you wait impatiently for the cables to be thrown and made fast and the gangways thrust out. There is the row of jabbering porters, with their blue blouses and brass number-plates, gesticulating on the quay. Here, on board, are the jostling passengers possessed exclusively for the time being by man's most primitive instinct of self-preservation. Even the injured lady, whose umbrella has just been smashed by the impact of somebody's suitcase, forgets that relatively minor trouble and waves the shattered shaft aloft in her anxiety to be first in catching the attention of a burly porter whom she has marked down as looking more honest and efficient than his fellows. "Portier ! Portier !" she screams. "Oui, Madame, soixante-dix," and he points to his little brass number-plate. "Une minute," and scorning the choked gangway, in some monkey fashion he escalades the rails, and getting out his leather strap hoists her baggage over his shoulder and flashes off again through the crowd with a parting : "Je vous attends à la douane." Those reunions at the *douane* remind one of the Revivalist hymn :

Will you meet me at the fountain,
When I reach the glory-land ?

.

Yes I'll meet you at the fountain,
At the fountain bright and fair,
Oh, I'll meet you at the fountain,
Yes, I'll meet you, meet you there.

And when the horror of the Customs is over—even romantics can hardly enjoy the Customs—there comes the pleasure of dashing to the station buffet before the Paris

train goes out and drinking the first French *café au lait* from thick-lipped and gloriously un-English cups. It is wretched stuff to taste for persons who dislike chicory, and the palate rebels. But who cares for such a trifling insurrection? Sentiment is lord and master and, so long as the beverage does not taste like any coffee at home, sentiment ensures that the pleasure in drinking it shall be real and unmarred by an involuntary wry face as it goes down. It is a magic known to the traveller. More successful than the ancient alchemists, he has found a formula for transmuting unlovely substances to gold. Duly settled in the Paris express, it is remarkable how well this formula works on the monotonous Picardy landscape. If the country were in England, the journey from Calais to Paris would seem as tedious as that from Crewe to London. But it is not in England, and it is therefore permitted you to change every goose to a swan without ever discovering the amiable illusion. Wide fields slip endlessly by, and for incident you are content with the long shadows, barred at the tip, cast by telegraph wires along the line. The countryside is in contrast to the meadows you passed through in the morning on your journey from London to Dover. It is moulded to an ampler scale with a disregard for charm of detail. Villages glimpsed for a moment as the train flashes past, the rocking railway carriage itself, the sweating officials in the restaurant car with their celluloid collars and blue and white striped jackets, all emanate a novel atmosphere which has no equivalent on the English side of the Channel. An itinerant Anglo-Saxon, you settle your shoulders against the clean white antimaccassar pinned to the back

of the seat and heave a sigh of contentment. You are fairly started *en route* for the Promised Land.

It is said that the exile in foreign parts despises the traveller for a bird of passage, and the traveller in his turn despises the tourist whose range is more limited than his own and whose feet are set on the "beaten track," and the tourist is so low in the scale of travelling enterprise that there is hardly anyone left of those who venture from home at all for whom he may feel contempt. Few people wish to be exiles, however, and many have not the means or the leisure or the hardiness to become travellers, so it happens that whether he likes it or not, it is as a member of the third and lowest class that the average Englishman crosses the channel. A Marco Polo or a Doughty he may be in imagination, but in sober fact he is to be included in the relatively unoriginal category of average folk who make more or less of a habit of going abroad for a few weeks' holiday during most years. He is just a plain tourist and must make the most of the description. If the title does not honour him, he must try and bring a little honour to the title. And indeed, it has always been a puzzle to discover why the term should be so nearly one of contempt, and why an Englishman should be so loath to admit its application to himself that he seizes the slightest excuse to dress himself up in the traveller's more attractive colours. Etymologically it is in no wise shameful. The French and Swiss hold a similar word in respect and rather like to be described by it. It is true that associations have clustered round it in this country which certainly do seem rather disgraceful, associations which revolt a man with a touch of Roman

in his composition. He thinks of " personally conducted " trips which are bad enough, but infinitely worse he thinks of that section of his countrymen whose master notion abroad seems to be to choose a railway compartment, a restaurant or a hotel where they shall meet fewest natives and most English—who are distinguished, in fact, by a desire, not to build Jerusalem in England's green and pleasant land, but a temporary England in everybody else's pleasant land. Still, there are tourists and tourists. By their works ye shall know them. And though a man may never have seen the sun rise from seas stranger than the Adriatic, or sink behind mountains more remote than the Alps, it does not therefore follow that he need regard every bather at the Lido, for instance, as his spiritual brother or sister, nor even each youth and damsel who stroll the classic ways of Chamonix or Zermatt or Grindelwald. He may never set foot on the golden road to Samarcand, nor

Sail beyond the sunset and the baths
Of all the Western stars,

and yet inwardly, despite the limitation of time and space imposed upon him, he may be in sympathy with the greatest travellers of history. Let him not, therefore, give way to false shame, but rather lead the tourist's " profitable life " with a high heart and a clear conscience—a right appetite is, after all, more important to the success of a banquet than a number of epicurean dishes. But in any case, there are so many dishes in this Barmecide feast of seeing foreign lands that even if a man confine his attention to countries which may be explored, in part

at any rate, during a few weeks of leisure, he need never lack exciting and stimulating variety through a lifetime.

There are numbers of persons, of course, who appear to get on very well all their lives without ever visiting a foreign land ; who have no craving for the stimulus of savouring scenes and habits of life which shall be as different as possible from their normal existence at home. They do not need the recreative wine of contrast. For those who do, however, the mere words " crossing the channel " have power to invoke the tastes and perfumes of the banquet. Sights and incidents, so trivial in themselves that you wonder why they have stuck in memory, suddenly leap forth from the shadows, and like the tags on which a psychologist will fasten to elucidate some tough problem, appear brim-charged with meaning. Thus all France south of the Seine and Loire is contained for me in a vignette which I came upon in the little town of Cluny, and have never since forgotten. One August afternoon, I was crossing a dusty and bright road outside the old part of the town, and I happened to look down it and saw it bordered on either side by pollarded sumachs or accacias, I do not know which. The afternoon sun was striking the green domes of foliage, irradiating them with rays level enough to make the light and shadow go deep among the close-set leaves. Their green was fused from blue shade and golden light. It was luminous and vibrant, and so rich that lizards basking on silver rocks would make a dull comparison of colour. Between the trees, a yoke of creamy oxen were swinging down the road. That was all—a scarcely notable vista in that ripe and sunburnt town, one of the least important to remember,

perhaps. And yet it became more notable than all the rest. It took upon itself to express the spirit of France.

Everyone has his own memory and his private symbol. Crossing the channel—the phrase will evoke a different vision to each different mind. For one, it may suggest a Paris boulevard on a hot summer's evening and sitting outside a café at a tin table to drink light beer from a tapering glass or sip dark coffee from a squat glass in a nickel holder ; to sip and watch the flow of passers-by between the platoons of chairs and tables and the range of trees on the outer pavement. For another, it may mean the engaging swagger, long put off but still to be seen like a laced coat laid away in a drawer, of some south German town. He will see the dead princelings strutting through their stucco palaces and along the avenues of their gardens laid out in the fashion of Versailles, and contriving sometimes quite by accident to infuse a sober German charm into the bedizened ideas of art which they have imported so assiduously from the flashing land across the Rhine. For a third it may be some scene from Spain or Italy that comes first to the mind, for a fourth the Alps.

But the notion of crossing the channel has power to invoke more than visions of fulfilled holiday delights. It conjures the almost sharper pleasures which haunt the anterooms of satisfaction. The words connote as well each stage and incident on the track to fulfilment. Take a journey to the Alps. The happenings of the way, as they follow one after another, are like rising notes in the incredibly joyful scale of the climber's anticipation. They break from his memory at the call of the evocative

phrase as surely as the grander visions of the Alps themselves. There is, for instance, that evening meal in the fair and florid restaurant of the Gare de Lyon, first sacramental dinner in a foreign land, eaten while he waits for the departure of the Simplon express. Let it be, if possible, the Simplon that bears him to the mountains. Alone of the great lines, it cuts clean across the central strength of the Alps, with its comrade the Rhône dividing the peaks of Valais from those of the Oberland. It exhales a spiritual aroma peculiar to itself from the moment when you meet it in Paris. There is none other like unto it. Indeed, you may almost distinguish the particular physical smell of its engines at the Gare de Lyon straining like leashed hounds to be off south-east. So let it be assumed that he boards the Simplon train and sleeps fitfully through the dark hours lapped in discomfort. In the middle of the night, breaking through the accumulated drowsiness of the passengers, comes the scream of the engine whistle and a shout announcing Dijon. And then he dozes off again until he is aroused to tumble out in the young morning for customs at Vallorbes. On each set of metals which run eastward across the flats of France and thread the mountains anywhere between Mulhausen and Grenoble, there comes a given moment when holiday dreams are turned into reality. For those who travel by the Simplon, the days of their dreaming are turned to the dream at six o'clock in the morning at Vallorbes. Vall-or-bes ! It sounds along the platform like the reverberations of a trumpet. It holds in fee the glory of the past, it bears

the promise of the future. It transfigures in a flash old hungry yearnings into expectancy, expectancy sharp and ineffable as in that fraction of a second when a singer seems to poise ere soaring to conquer the note of the climax. Days yet unborn of endeavour among the snows, dawn and zenith and sunset, leap up at the call. Like enchanted knights of a fairy tale they wait with swords drawn on the threshold of time.

Cramped with the night journey, the climber descends stiffly from the train and walks up and down the platform stamping feet to keep warm, for there is a new sting in the air, the chill of an atmosphere that has been sharpened and cleansed by contact with eternal snow. He snuffs up the wind like a dragon. All about the station, the wooded hills of the Jura come steeply down. There are wisps of cloud hanging on the pine-trees. Then the whistle goes and the train rushes forward again and, emerging from the tightly packed hills, begins the famous descent to the Lake of Geneva. At hand are upland meadows, far away in the east a ridge of silver white marks the summits of the Bernese Oberland, and to the south-west he can descry the snowfields of Mont Blanc with their might made mild by the distance. At mid-day, he is coasting along the shore of the lake and may tell off one after another the towns which sparkle in the sun at the fringe of the light blue water.

And the domed Velan, with his snows,
Behind the upcrowding hills,
Doth all the heavenly opening close
Which the Rhône's murmur fills.

Heavenly is no exaggerated epithet. At last, after the long months of waiting, faith in sight is swallowed up. When night falls and he strolls out of his hotel and along some dewy alp to greet the stars, breezes will come and brush against his cheeks which have blown straight from the summit of the Bietschorn or the Dent Blanche. He takes down rucksack and iceaxe from the luggage rack and waits impatiently for the train to draw up at the junction of his choice. Martigny, Sion, Visp and Brigue ; if ever railway junctions may be invested with poetry, it is these where the great arterial track fits on to the veins which take you into the heart of the mountains.

It is not only for the outward journey that the Englishman's sea frontier has power to weave spells. The Channel glorifies his home-coming. He is—the average Englishman—far more attached to the soil of his country than superficial observers allow. Perhaps it is a sentimental rather than a practical attachment. But it is none the less real. A rover he is proud to be, but not a nomad. Somewhere at the back of every traveller's mind is the comforting certainty that in the fullness of time he will decide to turn his face towards home—play Antæus. This subtle desire for the feel of English earth comes even to the mere tourist in his restricted wanderings through foreign parts. Fresh from the sparse winter of England, it is good to watch for a while, say, the growth of spring to summer in Tuscany. The brain brightens as a room when curtains are flung back at morning. Imagination wakes and dances in the

sunlight. The senses glory in the rich quick life. But there comes a moment when cypress groves and vermilion roofed farms and villas, hillsides grey with olive woods and quivering with heat, and terraces where seeds sprout lush and green all cease to supply energy to the northerner. They drug him to dreaminess and inertia. He has drunk his fill of the south and reaction has set in. Suddenly, he remembers—how spring comes to the valley of the North Tyne, for instance; the graces of the meadows showing off their new garments to charm the swart male moorland, the daffodils in grey-walled gardens, the topaz reaches of the river, the lambs, the lissome sky. Or, it may be that his leisure is up and he has to turn towards home before the vague oppression of the south has time to make itself felt. But he understands it, paradoxically, as soon as he has crossed the Alps on his homeward way. He descends the northern watershed by the loops of the St. Gotthard and sees the pastures about Amsteg and Flueln and Altdorf all jocund with buttercups; or he goes over the Brenner and fares northward across the plateau of Upper Bavaria, passing lands under tillage and farmhouses sheltered by trees—deciduous trees—and forests in the distance. His eyes are suddenly relieved and at rest.

When the northerner is actually living in a southern landscape he exults in its pomp and blare. He never reflects that a strain is being put upon his eyes and through them upon his brain. He forgets that in a swift journey of a few hours the whole scale of tone and colour values to which he is accustomed has been

overthrown. The relation between earth and atmosphere has been radically changed. In England, the blaze of the sky on the rarest summer day is tempered by heavy grassland, by low hills of corn, by foliage banked against the blue. The brooding greens and oranges absorb the light, tame it as it were and let it go again with claws drawn. And always the relation is preserved of a solid earth telling rich and dark in tone against a liquid sky. But in southern lands, the position seems almost reversed. As summer draws on, the earth instead of absorbing reflects the glare, flashing it back again from every salient point. The sky is dark and blinding and looks like marble. It is too hard to glow, too dark to blaze with colour. Not the faintest tremor of tone relieves the leagues of blue. Against it, the land shows pale; helpless, as it were. The soil is dry and bleached, the green of vineyards is shallow and tinged with citron, the olive trees make the hillsides seem as if they had been dusted with steel shavings, the dark evergreens only serve to emphasise the subservience of the earth to the sky. Here is the test—to set those grave groups of cypress and ilex against the northern beech and elm and lime in spring. No one who has turned back May beech-leaves as a child in order to stroke the down will ever be permanently in love with the south. He may sometimes think he is, glorying in a contrast. But when he comes north of the Alps again he realises that he has been indulging in charms which to him might soon become illicit. He crosses the Brenner and the balance of nature is restored. Once more the sky is in the accustomed

relation to the soil and the turf and the trees and the buildings. He is on earth that stretches unbroken to the northern seas ; and suddenly he realises the affinity between peoples that dwell north of the Alps. He feels that he has ideals and antipathies and a dim past in common, that he is no longer quite a stranger in the land. Odd that so subtle an emotional effect should spring from a mere physical rest to the traveller's eyes.

It is when this mood is upon him that the homing Englishman is in tune for the Channel's final spell. He crosses, perhaps as dusk falls, from Boulogne to Dover, and descrys the looming shape of the South Foreland, and watches while the lamps of Dover are one by one illumined and the lighthouses and lightships begin to blink along the coast—"the shadowy contours of the English coast, illuminated festally, interminably, unfailingly, as if for a sleepless feast or for sleepless toil." It seems as if the Channel were insisting that he should make something of a ceremony of his return. There is to be no slinking home by back ways. Let him come as a son and proudly claim his rights of greeting. Or, he crosses from Dieppe to Newhaven on an afternoon when the breeze runs sharp and the rain falls in a blur. Sailors fix the awnings and timid passengers go below at the sign. As the boat swings out into the open sea, the waves catch her forward and swirl up over the deck, but he waits on till his eyes smart and his lips are caked with salt ; and at last the fairest prospect of Sussex coastline is his reward. For, suddenly, the rain ceases and the mist lifts, there is a gash across the northern

storm-clouds and a glitter of sun on the sea ; and long shafts of light push through the rift and dart down on to the white precipices of Beachy Head.

Could he feel the same splendour of home-coming if the causeway of chalk hills were still above the surface of the water and he shot leap-frog into England across their bent backs ?





THE POETRY OF PEASANT SPEECH

It is certain that poets and peasants please us in the same way by translating words back again to their primal freshness.

—W. R. LOWELL.

EVERYONE who has lived at all among the peasants of the British Isles—using the term peasant here to describe the man or woman who has received little instruction out of books—must have been struck by the fact that these folk possess often a faculty, which educated persons appear for some reason to have lost, for putting the casual thoughts and feelings of everyday existence into picturesque and at times really beautiful language. Where the educated uses some stock expression, which has perhaps been current coin in the language for centuries and has long ago lost the original brilliance and edge of its meaning, the illiterate will often have ready on his tongue a perfectly new phrase coined on the spur of the moment in his own private mint. Instinctively, he invents an illustration or a turn of description to suit each individual occasion. His thoughts flow naturally into colourful and imagina-

tive speech. Indeed, if a loose definition of poetry may be allowed, unbounded by limits of rhyme or metre or even of formal rhythm and arrangement, but extending to all expression in words genuinely fired by fancy and imagination, then it is true to say that the speech of men and women who spend their whole lives doing manual work and never perhaps open a book is often aglow with touches of vivid expression which make real poetry. The peasant seems to share the poet's gift of thinking in pictures, a gift which enables him to point and emphasise the wording of his ideas with here and there some boldly fashioned phrase, or with a racy or beautiful or quaint and bizarre image. Occasionally the amateur may even match a poet master at his own art of weaving words.

Many of us have been made familiar with the poetic quality which may reside in peasants' talk through the work of three or four writers who belonged to that little group of Irish literati which was responsible for the so-called Celtic Renaissance and who have used in their books the idiom and the kind of language actually current among the people of Ireland. Lady Gregory, Mr. James Stephens, and J. M. Synge, than whom none know or knew more of the life and sayings of the Irish peasants, have caught and fixed in literature the strange and wild, or beautiful imaginations and expressions of the country folk and the travelling tinkers and the islanders along the western Irish coast. In a foreword to "The Playboy of the Western World," Synge tells us that he used in his plays one or two words only which

he had not heard among the country people of Ireland. And he goes on to say :

When I was writing *The Shadow of the Glen* some years ago, I got more aid than any learning could have given me from a chink in the floor of the old Wicklow house where I was staying that let me hear what was being said by the servant girls in the kitchen.

Dealing with an intensely imaginative people, Synge believed that he would be able to infuse more true poetry into his work by listening to and learning from them than he could by elaborating a "study" style, however sensitive and polished it might be. He drew his phraseology and his imagery direct from the talk that he heard in Irish cabins. The result is surprisingly rich and vigorous :

"Let you wait [he somewhere makes a peasant suitor say to his lady], let you wait to hear me talking till we're astray in Erris when Good Friday's by, drinking a sup from a well and making mighty kisses with our wetted mouths or gaming in a gap of sunshine with yourself stretched back unto your necklace in the flowers of earth."

In an Essay on Synge and the Ireland of his day, Mr. W. B. Yeats has written that Synge found the Irish dialect so rich a thing that he had begun translating into it fragments of the great literatures of the world, and had even planned a complete version of the *Imitation of Christ*. The translating of old masterpieces of poetry and prose into dialect and country idiom might seem at first sight a rash and almost freakish experiment, and

Synge did not live long enough to accomplish much of such work. But what he has done in recasting time-honoured literature into these moulds shows up in the most striking aspect that instinctive feeling for beauty of phrase which is the essence of all peasant speech. He has translated in this manner several of Petrarch's sonnets to Laura. One, perhaps the most vivid and exquisite and pathetic, in which Petrarch "understands the great cruelty of death" runs thus :

My flowery and green age was passing away and I feeling a chill in the fires had been wasting my heart, for I was drawing near the hillside that is above the grave. Then my sweet enemy was making a start little by little to give over her great wariness, the way she was wringing a sweet thing out of my sharp sorrow. The time was coming when Love and Decency can keep company and lovers may sit together and say out all things are in their hearts.

But death had his grudge against me, and he got up in the way like an armed robber with a pike in his hand.

Nothing is lost in the translation of dignity and refinement of expression. There is richness, but at the same time simplicity and an almost austere restraint. And is it not shown that the unsophisticated tongue of the people may sometimes convey nobly as any polished literary mode of language the thoughts of a great and cultured writer ?

Of all the people of the British Isles, the Irish have the most marked gift for investing even the prosaic affairs

of life with a sort of poetical significance. They are poorer in the possession of stolid common sense than their English neighbours across St. George's Channel. Uncontrolled, therefore, by the common-sense criterion, their glancing imaginations lead them like wills-o'-the-wisp. The legendary tales of their fine folk-lore are still told among them. Still they live in a romantic haze of make-believe and superstition, dark or beautiful, which science has hardly pierced, and which to the average English artisan with nearly a hundred and fifty years of scientific and mechanical tradition behind him would seem fantastic and ridiculous. Lady Gregory has made an interesting collection of current Irish folk superstitions. Many of the fishing people and others dwelling along the Atlantic shores, she tells us, believe firmly in mermaids for instance, and she records the most astonishing stories of their adventures with these marine beings. Then the people believe still in the Sidhe, the fairies, rightly descended from the ancient Celtic gods, whose exploits, handed down in the tales of Gaelic mythology, rival the feats of the gods of Olympus. But the Sidhe are now thought sometimes to be of the race of fallen angels. One old woman who affirmed that she had actually talked with an inhabitant of Tir-nan-og, the Land of the Young and the Celtic equivalent to the Elysian Fields, speaking about the Sidhe, told Lady Gregory :

“ They have the hope of Heaven, or they wouldn't leave one on the face of the earth and they are afraid of God. They'll not do you much harm if you leave them

alone ; it's best not to speak to them at all if you should meet them. If they bring anyone away [referring to the belief that mortals are sometimes spirited away to dwell for a time with the Sidhe] they'll leave some old good-for-nothing thing in its place and the same way with a cow or a calf or such things. But a sheep or a lamb it's beyond their power to touch because of our Lord."

Lady Gregory's book was published some years ago and events have been moving rapidly in Ireland. Already, perhaps, some of the beliefs which she relates have become obsolete. But it would require generations before the whole of that picturesque medley of superstition could be sorted out of the Irish mentality. Folk superstition will sway the Irish for years to come with a despotism which it has long ago abdicated so far as the English mind is concerned. So it comes about that the popular imagination in Ireland is richer and more supple than in England, and since the measure of a people's fancy and imagination must be reflected in the manner of their speech, the Irish way of speech is more richly coloured than the English.

But even so, in England, in spite of discouraging conditions, including, maybe, half a century of Board School education, we have still the prized remnants of a popular imagination. Peasant crafts and peasant ornaments, for example, have not quite died out yet from the English counties. Northamptonshire farmers still decorate their hayricks with finials—cocks made of straw—and carters the country over plait their horses manes and tails and braid them with ribbons for markets and

May days. The people deserve far more credit for fancy and imagination than is usually given to them. Go to the "Old Vic" and watch the huge audiences who assemble there to see Shakespeare played, or to hear the music of Mozart and Wagner, and note how they plunge themselves deep into the play or opera with primitive abandon.

A friend once told me that some years ago he was giving a couple of lectures to a working-class audience in the East End of London. The first lecture, on some political-economic subject, was indifferently received. So the second time he changed his tune, and what really went down with the audience was a lecture on the metres of Tennyson. Writing on the subject of long hours of labour and their result in the limited opportunities which working people get to gratify their desire for the pleasures that the good things of art and nature afford, the same friend has related :

"A fitter on weekly wages used to show in a poor cottage one of the best collections of British butterflies and moths, made entirely by himself. Many of them had been captured late at night on Chat Moss. A hair-dresser has told how to watch the habits of birds was the delight of his Sunday bicycle rides ; his assistant called attention to some little-known poet whose works had a special appeal for him. . . . Tramping through the Yorkshire dales and knowing them well, it was interesting to meet one who knew them better and to find that he was a chimney sweep who saved up his earnings to spend his holidays regularly there."

The mention of chimney sweeps brings to mind a little

incident showing a flash of true sympathetic imagination on the part of another and quite unrelated chimney sweep. This man was supposed to be sweeping a dining-room chimney. Instead, he was surprised by his employer gazing at an engraving of that fine illustration by Briton Rivière to those lines of Omar Khayyam :

. . . the lion and the lizard keep
The Courts where Jamshyd gloried and drank deep.

The picture shows a lion and his mate prowling up broad steps of an ancient and ruined city, and its suggestion of muteness and desertion is uncanny. The sweep turned round on being disturbed. " Oh," he said, " them dogs do look lonely ! "

Once you begin to look out among English working people for rich morsels of peasant phraseology, it seems remarkable how often, like shafts of sunshine breaking the monotony of a grey day, the gleams of picturesque expression occur ; for example, in conversations overheard in a railway carriage and in all sorts of chance talk that you may get with country people or town workmen. In the industrial north, among the dalesmen of Westmorland and Cumberland and Yorkshire, even among the farm folk of the agricultural counties, who are too often dismissed as inarticulate, the people's speech is often enriched by this gift for inimitable phrases, either picturesque or imbrued with pungent humour. A short time ago I was chatting one morning with a village cobbler about local politics. The conversation turned on the degree of popularity in the district of a neighbouring landlord who had earned the unfortunate reputation of

being "near." The cobbler summed up with the following matchless description of close-fistedness: "He wouldn't give you the dirt from under his finger-nails!" Is not this true to the great tradition of English satirical humour? I like to fancy that when the gentleman who coined that phrase comes at length to the Valhalla of humorists, Fielding and Sterne, out of all the jolly company assembled there, will rise to greet him and lead him to an honourable seat at the banquet board.

Another village acquaintance was explaining one day the sensations of successful convalescence after a severe operation. "I'm beginning," he said, "to feel the meat on my bones again." This recalls another rustic expression: "Fair hangin' wi' meat"—used to describe, not a leg of mutton as one might pardonably expect, but a particularly plump and healthy-looking baby!

The factory hands of Lancashire have always been celebrated for raciness of speech and a shrewd, rough-and-ready sense of humour. It might fairly be supposed, however, that gracefulness of fancy would hardly survive the daily grind among the clanging looms of a cotton factory, combined with the bleak environment and cheerless aspect of an East Lancashire town; the rows of dwelling-houses built of cold-looking stone, and belying by their harsh grey exteriors what warmth and welcome may be within; and the mills closed in on every side by dark-coloured and unsmiling moors. Yet, in spite of surroundings and work which must seem unsympathetic and even blighting to a sensitive imagination, some of these mill hands now and then express their thoughts,

quite casually as it were, in phrases full of grace and charm. I was told recently by a friend of a conversation he had had with a girl operative in one of the East Lancashire towns. He had his small daughter with him, and while he and the mill girl talked together they watched the child who was dancing and skipping about them at her play. "Why!" the mill girl exclaimed, "she's donned i' wind!" Even Shelley might have been satisfied by that image and the music of those four words.

Indeed, this faculty for coining a telling image which so many peasants possess makes the strongest link in that strange alliance between poetry and the rough speech of the labourer and the artisan. Like the poet, peasants seem happier and more at home on the firm ground of concrete reality rather than in the nebulous region of abstractions, and so when they express their ideas it is natural to them to do so with the help of a word-picture. A peasant, for example, telling you about his job, uncertain and poorly paid, might describe it as "like licking honey off a thorn." This fondness for concrete illustration makes his talk picturesque in the true sense, lending it fire and a fine relish in contrast with the rather insipid selection of language in which most educated people carry on their ordinary conversation. Where the educated resort to sapless superlatives, or a hackneyed and thin image like "cold as ice," the peasant will achieve his emphasis with some vivid and pithy simile. He might inform you that it was "cold as snow in harvest," or "cold as the north side of a January grave by starlight." Indeed, the lack of colour and individuality in the con-

versation of educated people may be traced to an absence of imagery. Either through poverty of imagination, or through a false shame of appearing poetical, the educated seldom express themselves as it were in pictures. When they do use a picture it is, as a rule, some old image sanctioned by tradition and, as fresh coin of speech, obliterated out of all recognition by years of wear and tear. Most of these hack images come from literature. They pass into the language first as quotations, perhaps, and then gradually become part of the common currency of speech. It is only necessary to read half a dozen plays by Shakespeare and mark the number of stock phrases to see how the process works. The similes which he minted fresh and gleaming have been worn and dulled by generations of thoughtless repetition. Current English is cluttered up with this debased coinage. It ought to be called in and taken out of circulation. Meanwhile, the illustrations and the images which enrich the conversation of an uninstructed peasant never enter the head of an educated person at all, or, should they find a way in, they are generally suppressed there and then lest they should appear extravagant if put into words.

More than one good piece of imagery I have culled from the talk of a country-woman who hails from some remote agricultural village in Huntingdonshire. One day, she was speaking about a favourite dog which had died a few weeks earlier and insisting that the animal had prematurely worn himself out by his inordinate energy. "I often said to myself," she remarked, "when I seed that dog racing about: Some day he'll go out just like dew before the sun." Her range, too, is

admirable. She told me once that a certain bowl for soup would "hold more than a whale's belly." This particular country-woman can hardly open her mouth without giving some delightful and original twist to what she has to say, and her humour is worthy of a Mrs. Poyser.

There is, however, a depressing force at work which may one day sap the vigour and dull the brightness that remains in English peasant speech like rust that crumbles in time a hard and glittering piece of metal. Psychologists tell us that increasing civilisation and social order tend to curb and control the fancies generated by a nimble imagination; fancies which find one outlet in a picturesque popular language. Most of us nowadays have absorbed a good deal of surface civilisation. We are, for instance, less under the influence of superstition than our forefathers, and we probably reason better than they in the sense that we are more careful about our premises before we draw a conclusion and less liable to be enticed by remote and wild analogies and gaily to assign effects to impossible causes. Science is teaching us to go more cautiously. But it may be that what we gain in common sense and reason, we must pay for in the weakening of fancy, and this involves as a by-consequence the gradual starving of our popular language into a pallid and featureless way of speech. It is probable that there are fewer Englishmen to-day able to put their thoughts into a sort of poetical language than was the case two or three hundred years ago. The wings of the people's untamed fancies are in danger of being remorselessly clipped by the shears of cold matter of fact. Our folk

stories are mostly forgotten, or may be found only in books that are seldom read. The dominion of science over thought and matter has killed most of the old quaint beliefs and superstitions and what seem now to us romantic customs of English country life. Fairs and morris dancing on a village green have given place to co-operative shops and cinemas. Instead of postchaises with the postboy astride his foaming mount, and gaily painted stage-coaches complete with cracking whip and loaded blunderbuss, all lurching cheerfully over the shocking surface of the old North Road, we have an immaculate highway and a succession of sleek, efficient and most serviceable, but wholly unromantic, motor-cars. The picturesque element is slipping out of our national life in all sorts of small ways. It is being suppressed for instance in the homes, at any rate, the city and suburban homes of the people. How commonplace look the gimcrack villas—and how the old Romans would shudder at the debasement of the name by which they called their gracious country houses—of the suburbs compared with quiet and dignified old cottages ; the interlaced black and white work of Cheshire and Shropshire, the thatch of the East Counties and the warm stone cottages of the Cotswolds with lichen growing over the mellow stone-tiled roofs and evening sunshine gilding the casement panes set in their stone sills and mullions.

These are discouraging considerations. It may well be true that the temperate climate of civilisation is not conducive to luxuriant growths of fancy and that the plant has already begun to flag. Nevertheless, there seems to be a strain of wiry native vigour running

through our popular imagination which, in happy circumstances, even in the twentieth century, must make it hard to kill. One good sign, proving that the cut-to-measure process of civilisation has not yet stripped the people's life of individuality, is the tenacious hold still retained in the provinces by the English dialects. At a Keswick sheep fair, the conversation of the Cumbrian farmers, packed with strange words and unfamiliar locutions, would be quite unintelligible to a South countryman. Not many people brought up south of the Mersey and the Humber know the sense of that queer verb "to be clemmed," which has done such hard service in Lancashire, and which means to be starving hungry. Nor do Southerners have those two expressive adjectives "jannock" and "gradely"—jannock meaning honest or straightforward, and gradely used for something fine, well set-up; but a person must have been bred in the north to understand the exact range of their meaning. Is not "gradely" put to delicious use in the following description of the heated appearance of a certain coal-owner who was coming up from the pits on a hot summer day? "Eh," said a miner, standing at the pit head and speaking obviously with a sort of personal pride in the owner's physical condition: "Master —— is a gradely sweater!"

In right surroundings we can still be sure of meeting with hearty-minded artisans and peasants, showing their temper in a full-blooded and mettlesome speech and keeping alive our traditional dialect forms and words and the fine snap, like a spiced sharpness, of our old English idiom.

As a sort of *bonne bouche*, I have kept to the last a final morsel of inimitable expression. This plum was extracted from a conversation on the subject of baldness with a country friend who had reason to apprehend the near approach of that state. "I often think," was the remark, "that when winter comes, the flies 'll be skating over my head." The natural history may have been weak, but the impression conveyed was gloriously graphic.





CITIES OF THE PENNINES

AS a small child, one of my early delights was to scale a two-storeyed attic staircase at the top of the house which brought the climber on to an open tower with battlemented parapet and a leaded floor. From the tower you looked down into the topmost foliage of tall lime-trees, trees that to a child standing beside their boles and peering up had seemed almost to touch the clouds. You could look straight down, too, into the stable-yard and note how deliciously and oddly compressed from head to foot appeared anybody who might be crossing it. And from the tower you gazed as well far beyond the confines of the garden, and on a clear day saw spinneys of factory chimneys backed by hills which bounded the northern and north-eastern sector of the horizon. In the half-mist of the smoky distance, the chimneys looked lithe and fastidious. What could be seen varied greatly with the weather. On days when rain was coming from the west and south, the atmosphere would often be clear for hours beforehand in foreboding ; and then elders pointed out

Bolton in the farthest distance, just distinguished as a blur of broken silvery haze. But they were sure of its identity, because Rivington Pike rose behind, gauze-like yet definite, a hill in stature, but a mountain in bold comeliness of outline. I do not think that it was ever possible to penetrate sufficiently behind the immense screen of smoke which hung above Manchester and Salford to make out with any definition the forms of the hills which enclosed them—with the exception perhaps of Blackstone Edge.

Those unheavenly twin towns sprawl in the arena of a great right-angled bend made by the hills at Rochdale. From Rochdale to Bolton, the escarpment faces due south instead of west. The streams which descend to the plain wander south; even after joining up with the Irwell, they still continue their southern aberration, regardless of the proximity of the Irish sea, until they are finally intercepted by the powerful Mersey and recalled to a proper sense of direction. If this right angle were bisected and the line of bisection produced some twenty miles across the Cheshire plain, the view point from the tower would be found a little to the south-west of the bisector. Thus you had the finest views of all when the escarpment of the Pennines broke on its true course again and emerged from the curtain of Manchester smoke. Beyond the sapling chimneys of Hazel Grove and Stockport and Hyde, you could see the great moors of the High Peak and the hills above dark Woodhead where the rock sticks out in bare ribs, grimy to the hands and clothes of the climber. South and east from the tower the outward view was cut off by a bluff of hill right at

hand. And beyond the hill, you came to woods of Scotch fir and bracken, to wishing wells and wizards' wells, to undulating fields, to copses and farmhouses built of greenish sandstone or half timbered black and white, to little churches and great houses, all stretching away in a broad and long succession through Cheshire and Shropshire and Flintshire, to the sands of Dee and the mountains of Wales. You stood as it were at a parting of the ways. On the one side, the cities of the Pennines were driving their boundaries ever forward across the plain so that their smutty breath touched the laurels and hollies and rhododendrons in the garden. On the other side, rural England had undisputed rule ; bunches of stupid cattle, barging and jostling, churned up the mud at the gates of fields and in the lanes as they made their way to the byre, threshing machines whirled through the autumn, the crack of guns echoed through December woodlands. The lives of grown people whose work and purpose were claimed by the towns, but who were free of the country in their play, must have seemed curiously divided between these two discordant conceptions of a way of life. But the cities claimed no vassalage from a child. All regular childish activities were concerned with the woods and the fields. There were trees to climb and ponds to skim for tadpoles, and a garden to dig and in the winter (in that golden age) there was always ice and snow and skating on the mere.

The ice always contrived, too, most obligingly to bear during the week-end, and on Sunday morning, with your father's connivance, you would cut church, which gave the expedition a pleasing flavour of truancy, and

sally forth across the dead fields which resisted the impress of grown-ups' and children's feet alike. It was fun to sit on the bank of the mere among the willows, whose dipping trailing arms were frozen stiff into the water, and strap on the skates and then rise gingerly and sail away with unexpected speed and ease upon the smooth grey surface. The mere was oval-shaped, and you used to skate as near as you dared to an open spring in the centre where all the water-birds from the ponds and lakes for miles around collected to drink. Looking back across time and change, that mere seems to act as a touchstone for all subsequent comparisons between the look and life of the traditional English countryside and the great towns to east and north. It was set in the midst of park-land, but as you strapped on the skates, you looked across the water to a beechwood which bordered one long side of the oval. May and October are the obvious months to seek the fullness of beauty in a beechwood, but when you came to know it through all months and at all hours of the day, you learned in time that the subtlest beauty was revealed in February or early March. Nature is quieter and more aloof in late winter than at any other time of the year ; it is as if the fields and the hills were engaged in a final act of introspection before giving themselves to the crowded business of spring. It is then that a person becomes conscious of qualities in things that at other and fuller times go unnoticed. He watches wood smoke rising through a thin air and suddenly becomes aware of the soundlessness of its ascent. He discovers colours, the crimson wands of bushes in a hedgerow glowing through faint mist, or the violet satin quality of slated roofs.

During those last weeks of the winter, it used to be so still beside the mere that you dared hardly breathe lest the exquisite poise of the atmosphere might be disturbed. The water lay like polished lead, and beyond was the great bank of beech-trees, thousands of boughs weaving themselves together, so that from the opposite shore they could not be distinguished as separate trees, but formed a tissue of rust and blue and purple streaks. On no two days would the strange stuff of the beech-wood be alike ; it changed even from minute to minute as gleams of sunshine flickered and faded across the mere. At one moment, the purples might be soft as bloomy grapes and the next cold, like the violet light which steals over an Alpine snowfield when the after-glow of sunset has died. When twilight approached, the violet changed to grey and the trees grew unsubstantial like a forest of wraiths, but at night, under the stars, they made a sash of silk, deep and black, laid against the steel breast-plate of the sky.

From the skaters' bank, the ground, rather oddly, sloped downward to a boundary wall at the main road and to the mill-pond and mill. The house which went with the mill was build of old brick like faded roses, and it had stone mullions and a stone roof, and one wall was built right into the water, so that reality and reflection could make a perfect joint. Close by the mill there was a smithy. The odour of seared hooves hung about its door. From the twilight within came gleams of heated iron like tiger lilies, a jet of sparks fading out in mid air, a second of illumination on the smith's arms and face as the furnace glowed and sank. In the other

direction, if you walked along the bank of the mere to the sharp curve at the end, the great house of the Lord of the soil came into view among groups of beech-trees, house and outbuildings and trees all amiably in the grand manner, august but without arrogance or ostentation. And if you continued round the curve and into the beechwood, along a path which it was an impudence for a mere outsider to take, you came to a seat and a cutting through the trees down to the water's edge. This gap was sighted on to another gap in a wood about half a mile away, and the two made a vista for a sturdy church tower—a Norman tower. On a Sunday evening, in late spring or summer, the noise of the bells drifted up to the mere in bouts of devastating sweetness. There would be great frayed rugs of pink weed spread over the water and a swan would glide occasionally along the channels between them with the faintly dipping gait of a ship in full sail before a light wind. And the evening sunshine would lie like transparent gold leaf upon the fields. At such times the bells could invest the mere and fields with the Lotus eaters' magic—yet they made a curiously English Lotus-land. Other peoples take their countryside in earnest, and in no other country but England, I believe, would the quality of that scene and sound be possible; winsome, elusively sensuous, pervaded by that odd feeling of unreality which sometimes clings to an English country view, as if it were nothing more serious than staging for some "Merrie England" pageant produced with serene disregard for the rough facts of history.

Here, then, were all the ingredients of English country

life, the centres round which for hundreds of years it had revolved. They were marshalled under the eyes of the stark confident cities with their background of heather moors and peat-hags as a reproach or an incentive or a warning—what you will. The amazing contrast between them was, at any rate, an invitation to take no one set of values on trust.

It is a tricky undertaking to try and read the faces of young and pushing towns, far harder than to read the face of a countryside, or even of a time-marked town. They mask their essential personalities with unconscious craft. Perhaps the difficulty is because they have no history. There is no traditional type to which you can refer for a standard, nothing of that sense of life gone by which somehow enables you to stand a little way off and get a perspective. You could set out to analyse the quality of Bruges or Siena with more assurance than that of Bury or Stockport. And in these cities of the Pennines, the difficulties are increased by a surface character of defiance; they do not ask to be loved, scarcely ask even to be respected, they go forward from strength to strength, uncritically, without waiting to weigh the values of their life. It is the enthrallment of trying to get below that defiant surface in order to find out what may be underneath, gestating as it were for future birth, that holds the interest, holds it perhaps more absorbingly than the beautiful and lovable lingerers from the past can ever do.

Old towns are built mainly in brick and stucco. You think of the peaked fronts of tall and narrow houses along an Amsterdam canal, the dark green of the water

and brighter green of the trees which fringe it telling against ripe brick or ruddy rough-cast. Or, you think of old small towns in England with meandering High streets, and here and there a house half-timbered and plastered. These have friendly faces. But the towns of the Pennines, old and new alike, are, or should be, built of stone. And stone is the least friendly of all building materials. It can be made to seem magnificent, arrogant, noble, protective, according to the mood of the builder. It can weather to majestic effects of shade and light as in the Portland buildings of London, it can convey the hard satisfaction of man in getting the upper hand of some recalcitrant tract of nature as in granite castles of Scotland, but it does not so easily express companionableness. Certainly, no Lancashire town seems companionable. Indeed, the uncompromising quality of stone is accented, for the Pennines are an uncompromising country and Lancashire towns are typically built of the rocky framework of the hills. They are made from the bones of the mountains as Eve was fashioned from the rib of Adam. Most towns are not in this way bone of the bone and flesh of the flesh of the country immediately surrounding them. London clay never produced a building rock, and London, so far as it is built of stone, is an exotic. But the Lancashire towns grow from the heart of their sites. Every house or factory in Rochdale or Burnley or Todmorden or Oldham could be built of rock quarried from the hillsides above them. Even accumulated layers of smoke cannot overlay this fundamental unity of the Pennine towns with the country from which they spring. Unity is the

exact word. Exotic materials achieve harmony. There are few harmonies more satisfactory, for instance, than the stone-built colleges of Oxford founded on the water meadows of the Thames. But native materials give unity which permits a simpler and perhaps more enduring sort of beauty. The Pennine towns are not *at one* with their surrounding country, they are one with it. And because the Pennine country is stark and resistant, the Pennine towns are stark and resistant. Nature not man made them so. These characteristics are implicit in the medium of which they are built.

No other tract of England, except perhaps the northern uplands which the Roman soldiers scanned from Hadrian's wall, gives the same feeling of aloofness from anything human as the moors of the Pennines. They are primitive nature's last stronghold in England, and that in spite of the fact that at their feet and far up their dales and cloughs an industrial civilisation, last phase of man's activity in subduing the earth, shouts aloud the tale of its successes and its endeavours. Between Hexham and Leek, a distance of a hundred and thirty miles as the crow flies, there are only three road routes by which a man can cross them—can cross England that is—and keep below the thousand-foot contour line. There is the famous fault which runs behind the Roman wall along the valleys of the Irthing and the Tyne. It gave the Romans their lateral communications, and a strip of civilisation between the barbarians to the north and the unsubdued Britons in their rear among the hills of Westmorland and Durham and Yorkshire ; and it must have determined them far

more on the line of their wall than the relatively trivial consideration that England happens to be narrowest between Carlisle and Newcastle. South of the Tyne and Irthing there is no low level route at all until the valleys of the Lune and Wenning can be followed up from Lancaster or the Ribble from Preston. And south of Preston the third and last road which manages to keep below the thousand-foot line runs between Manchester and Halifax through Rochdale and Todmorden. To cross those moors can be a strangely lonely undertaking, particularly in winter. It is but three or four years ago since a man was killed in attempting to walk over the Peak during a winter evening of hard weather. He lost his direction and wandered and finally gave out from exposure, was killed by the weather and the place as surely as if he had been alone in an arctic waste or on the storm-swept ice-slopes of a Swiss peak. Even to drive a motor-car across one of the higher passes can be lonely. When the last street of grey setts and the last grey-walled field have been left below and the road strikes out across the backbone of the ridge, it seems as if time had leapt suddenly backward through immense geological ages. The stretches of withered heather, the yawning black beds of peat, the tufts of dun grass, the gloaming sky, belong to an era before man had appeared on the earth. They are the unworked material of the world which we inhabit. And the throb of the motor stretching out to cross the broad ridge, the touch of your hand on the steering wheel, instead of recalling you to a reassuring sense of the twentieth century, seem to emphasise the primordial quality of the moors. They

clinch the sense of intrusion. At any moment this surviving piece of protean earth might resent the presence of a human being and human contrivances, the bogs and the heather might close across the road and swallow it up and have the intruder trapped—sole representative of his race in the midst of maleficent desolation.

These hills are a gigantic paradox. Undeniably they have dour faces. In some of their moods, even the imagination which Emily Brontë nurtured from them seems scarcely exaggerated. When their fields laugh, it is a restrained laughter of sunshine on stone walls and wiry turf; when their ling colours up, it contrives to do so austere without the pretty flush, the maidenly sentimental appearance which so often spoils a Scottish moor in bloom. When their oak trees are in leaf, they do not become lush and overweighted with foliage like the trees of the plain, they never lose the lean look of living things that have to fight for their right to grow strong. There is no effusive and obvious invitation to man to settle among them. Looking back over history, you can imagine the Romano-Celts, perhaps a little dandified with their imported southern culture, beaten back and back into the moorland fastnesses by succeeding waves of Teuton invaders, and the bleak battle with nature which they would have to fight merely in order to hang on to life. Or you can think of the invaders themselves, always in search of more land to settle, prospecting up the narrowing rising cloughs and then turning back disheartened to the mouths of the valleys. They would have no report to bring back about a land flowing with milk and honey. But there

precisely lies the paradox. The first scouts had no eyes for the reserved riches of the Pennines. In time, no doubt, enterprising farmers discovered the efficacy of the hill turf for grazing sheep. All through the Middle Ages farms would be pushed further and further up into the hills, and hamlets would be expanded into villages and villages into towns as more and more wool came down to the valleys for spinning and weaving. But it has been left for quite modern Calebs and Joshuas to hail the Pennines as a Promised Land; the Calebs and Joshuas who knew the advantage of the dank climate of the western slopes for working cotton; who, casting around for power to drive the new machinery of their mills, thought to harness the strength of the mountain streams; who, needing fuel for their furnaces and for more and yet more power, probed the deep coal measures at the mountains' feet.

So the men of Yorkshire and Lancashire and Derbyshire came into their long-deferred inheritance and went about with careless confidence to set their seals on the intransigent surface of the land. But they reckoned without their hosts. The Pennines would give up their treasure, but they must make over the gift in their own way. They would never permit themselves to be tamed and domesticated. The country gave its body to be scarred and blasted, but it kept its fierce spirit intact. Quietly, but surely, in spite of antagonisms and rebellions, the spirit of the hills has won a sort of ascendancy over the new forms and expressions of life in the swarming towns below. The heavy swaggering black buildings in the main squares of places like Bury or Burnley are a

part of it, so even are the scraggy streets which link Manchester to Oldham. They are mean and grimed; the view is bounded by a slag heap or a dump of scrap-iron, a patch of waste ground with a sour pond and rank weeds. But the wind from the moors blows through them in astringent gusts and keeps the inhabitants courageous, holding them to the independence of their birth as hill-men.

In some places, it seems as if the spirit of the moors had proved too harsh at times and the men of the towns had revolted against their intangible ruler. You feel that they have sought to enliven and adorn their cheerless vistas in order to satisfy a craving—the hunger that all northern people feel at one time or another in their lives for opulence of shape and colour and warmth. They have tried to make something which shall be a substitute in their eyes for these qualities which they have missed. Look, for instance, at the entrance to Manchester from the south along the Oxford road. The Lancashire astringency of form and hue has been overborne; it survives only in the Georgian church of All Saints, black and angular and plain of surface, emphatic against a grey sky. In its place, the northern hunger has contrived to guy the baroque opulence of the south and feeds on that. There is the great hospital of bright brick with stone froggings, a lavish maze of buildings, yet a not unworthy conception of prosperity; there are the warehouse frontages, broad and tall and florid, forgetful of the lean mills of the dales on whose strength they were reared. There are the Insurance Offices, flaunting glossy tiling and a plethora of irrelevant decora-

tion on their walls. All these buildings—edifices might be an apter word—have been put up within a generation, yet you cannot feel angry at the wasted opportunity. They were needed to express a part of the character of the town. The growing giant has swaggered a bit and been rather vulgar—he could not quite refrain from chinking the money in his pockets—but underneath all that is discernible his shy and very human wish, now that he is a powerful fellow in the world, to put off the restrictions and the austere garb of his upbringing and face his destiny in freer and more dashing style.

It is among the smaller towns that the quality of the Pennines can best be apprehended. There the native Doric has not been altered almost out of recognition by the striving to create an imitation of the opulence of southern capital cities. Certainly, they too have desired to brighten up their looks, but the moors have been too stubborn for them. On rainy Saturday evenings you get the effect of their attempt, when the big murky buildings are sleek with wet, and street lamps flare, and shop windows are gaudy, and shadows lie crudely across the shine of pavements and setts, and people pass and repass, and the trams go rocking by like Gargantuan lanterns carried by invisible giants. Decorate a bleak and taciturn material and the result is garish, almost raffish. It is pathetic, too. Rochdale trying to rival the careless lights of Paris and its fine freedoms! A gold and scarlet coat would go more seemly on the shoulders of a Puritan than libertinism of lights and buildings in this land of millstone grit. On days of fleeting sunlight, however, the smaller towns slip back

to the aspect that is natural to them. Particularly is this so where the old straggling village that grew up round half a dozen mills or a family colliery can still be distinguished. I think of stony Glossop, tucked away under the Peak, with its steep alleys and its angularities provoking to the motorist, and here and there the featureless wall of a mill pierced with rows of even windows. I think of a cunning motor route north through the outlying villages of Manchester and Bolton, worked out to avoid tramlines. One of those villages, I forget its name, is an almost perfect expression of the spirit of the moors in stone and mortar. The main street straggles up a hill and over and down on the other side, lengthening out without any particular plan. The roadway is faced with setts, the pavements flagged and bordered by gritstone cottages in uneven blocks. Bars of stone, which make the cottage door-steps, show concave in the middle, worn by decades of treading; and through the doors ajar you can see straight into the living rooms whose floors are just below the level of the pavement. They are sparse cottages, but sturdy; they argue a hard way of life, but not a sordid one. However low Lancashire dwellings may descend, they never quite reach the abyss from which leprous-walled stucco tenements issue a whining appeal for destruction. These, though, cannot have been very low in the scale, for I recall children playing in the road who showed red cheeks and bright hair against the prevailing grey. Threading along the main way in the car, you had glimpses down side streets of slag heaps and colliery plant showing in cabalistic designs against the sky.

Beyond, and to the west, the ground levelled out and merged into the monotonous spread of the plain towards the distant sea. But to the east and north, you looked straight across the wide valley of the Irwell and up to Bolton, and there were hills for a background. The valley was checked with grey factories and green meadows, and the sun, just out after rain, turned the faint haze of smoke above it transparent and made the colours thin and delicate like the colours you see through clear water. A short distance away from the village there was a single big house, built naturally of stone, surrounded by sinewy trees and with plots of dark grass before it. It was the sort of house that Robert Moore who married Shirley might have lived in.

People talk of the "real" England, the "real" Germany, the "real" anything that has an ideal as well as an actual aspect. What they mean, presumably, is that quality in the actual England or Germany which squares most closely with their conception of the ideal, comes nearest to what they think England or Germany ought to be. If, then, there be a real Lancashire, a Lancashire which lives in accord with some inner truth of its being, I should place it here. There are no fine shades, except those lent by the atmosphere, but the play of sun and haze can transfigure the face of the country, redeem the ugliness of slag-heaps and factory yards, coax laughter on surfaces of gritstone, send shadows of clouds chasing each other across the rare fields, like green grotesques alternately dim and brilliant. Lancashire has laid itself out to get all the help it can from atmospheric effects. Its towns, for instance, lie

conveniently at the foot of hills. Cities almost always look enchanted when you see them from some height immediately above. Recall Florence from the hills beyond Fiesole on a stormy afternoon when the light is as blue flame; or Bruges and the surrounding plain from the belfry—Bruges like a vermilion lily afloat on a pale green lake; or Belfast from Divis when the lough and shipyards and dockside warehouses are wrought into a delicate scheme of blue and mauve and saffron—like a Monet painting—set off here and there by the black pencilling of a crane. Recall these, and then set beside them in your mind some town of the western Pennines seen from its guardian hills; and see how Cinderella has been transformed. She can hold her own at the ball. Conjure that moment on the long descent from the “Cat and Fiddle” when you first look suddenly down upon Macclesfield dreaming underneath an aura of silver smoke with the green uplands and plain of Cheshire beyond. The shine on that film of smoke is like morning sun on webs of gossamer. Or, think of breasting the central water-shed of England and coming to where the moors curl over and break down to Rochdale and Oldham. You gaze down and down, and see dimly below the brown hills smoke-muffled towns invested with the wonder of secrets half-revealed. What though you know that once you descend the secrets will be stripped of magic. For the moment those misty towns are invested with romance. The spell of the “other side” is upon them, and you can stand and gaze as Northern invaders may have gazed when they looked

down for the first time on the rich valleys of Italy, or as children gaze when they climb out of the home vale and discover what lies beyond.

Old towns like Winchester, for example, or York, fulfilled with an honourable history, direct the thoughts towards the past. But it is a part of the quality of the towns of the Pennines that you cannot be amongst them for long without having your speculations bent wholly towards the future. They have no glorious past to trade on. They are the makers and not the monuments of history. That, too, is the difference, and a difference more fundamental than any of outward appearance, between them and the agricultural land which stretches away from their feet. The English countryside has made its history. It has had its turbulent feudal youth, its arrogant eighteenth-century manhood. To-day it stands for *finis* at the end of a book. It has not yet begun to write the second volume of its story. It has given a quality to English life; and the special aroma has been safely garnered in the great perfumery. But the Pennine towns are still scrawling the opening paragraphs of their history. They are not yet sure of their genius; and the contribution that they will finally make to English life is undetermined. Pessimists have been heard to suggest that the knell of their prosperity is already sounding and that they will go down in ruin—decay before ever they have, as the old phrase runs, found their souls. But it is hard to believe that decay has really attacked the heart of their virile life. Rather, I would remember that their blasted dales and hillsides

can be made comely—by sunlight and mist ; and take that transfiguration as a symbolic promise for the future ?

Can we believe . . .
That the maker of cities grew faint
with the splendour of palaces.

• • • • •
So he built a new city,
ah can we believe, not ironically
but for new splendour
constructed new people
to lift through slow growth
to a beauty unrivalled yet—





ANTÆUS

What is this life if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare ?

MOST people in most moods probably find that the surest kind of recreation is to get some way or other into closer contact with the earth than ordinary life permits. Occupations that were grim labour to our ancestors become zestful play to us of the black-coated age. According to the primitive rules, we are dilettantes at the game of life, giving merely our leisure where our forefathers had to squander the sum of their energies. This prince of High Finance, whose working activities flash across a continent, uses his free time to cultivate an acre of Hertfordshire garden, that eloquent advocate is satisfied when he has squatted out all a winter's night with his gun beside him on a Solway marsh, waiting for the wild geese to come to their feeding grounds at dawn. Gladstone swung an axe in the intervals of party politics

and theological controversies. Yet scarcely two thousand years ago, the tribesmen of Cassivellaunus were snatching desperately precious harvests on the site of the High Financier's garden, and Picts lay out at dawn on the Solway shore with the chance of a bow-shot between them and a frosty day's starvation, and perhaps some Cymric prospector was clearing for dear life the first oaks from Hawarden. "L'Humanité refait son âme plus avec ses mains qu'avec sa pensée," said a wise Frenchman. It seems to be a necessity of our well-being, based on some obscure psychological or physiological law, that we should keep in touch, if only through our play, with the elementary and immediate problems of the race in carrying on its existence on this planet. Observe the instinct in children. I look back and remember a certain famous summer of drought when the official water-supply at my home gave out. I was most anxious to supply the household uses with muddy and stagnant liquid from a little pond in the garden that was called mine. To have been permitted to do that would have increased one's self-respect a thousand-fold—far more than an irrelevant capacity to conjugate French verbs or remember the dates of the Kings of England. Yet, as civilisations grow in complexity and extent the average person's contact with the earth gets less and less direct. There is no obvious link of hand to mouth necessity. The System under which we live thrusts more and more middle men between us and the opportunity to satisfy for ourselves the bare conditions of keeping alive, the conditions of getting food and

sufficient warmth and shelter from the earth, of learning cunning, or physical prowess to defend ourselves from attack. Faced with these elementary considerations, the man of the industrial age fulfills them no more thoroughly in his own person than the worker in a Ford factory makes a motor-car by his individual effort. The artisan stands at his post and screws a nut, as the car, mounted on its trolley, travels past him on the road to completion. And modern man—but modern man is the Ford worker, and screwing nuts is not only his contribution towards a finished motor-car, it is the rent he pays for his right to be alive. If he drops out of his niche he will probably starve, or, at any rate, come nigh to want, in the long run, just as certainly as would his ancestor whose harvest had failed on the slopes above the Chess or whose arrow had missed the wild goose on Solway marsh. But there will be no visible and inevitable relation between cause and effect. He will never feel that his failure to screw nuts has demonstrated his incapacity at the sheer job of being a man.

A short while ago, for the Harvest Thanksgiving of a church in a London slum, it was decided, I believe, to decorate the church in a way that would seem more in harmony with the lives of the parishioners than sheaves of corn and fruits. So the good things of the earth were represented by tinned salmon and canned peaches and somebody's dried peas. There you have the modern process in epitome. It is the old myth revived in twentieth-century dress of Herakles who wrestled with the giant Antæus and strove, in order to subdue him,

to lift him from his feet so that his strength-giving contact with the earth might be broken.

Instinctively, the modern Antæus knows that by one means or another he must not let himself be lifted quite away from the earth. It is an elemental urge that bids him try out as well as he can in his play whether he would be fit to live if the trappings were taken off and the middle-men withdrawn. The impulse finds its outlet in all sorts of tortuous ways. A desire, deeper perhaps, even than the craving for pure air and sunlight has produced the dormitory villas or the weekend bungalows in the country round large towns. There, at any rate, Antæus can prove his capacity for growing his own peas, even if he cannot catch his own salmon, or coax the English climate into yielding him ripe peaches. The current passion for games is a part of it, distorted, may be, but authentic. Exhortations to play for the sake of the game and not for the prize are based on instinctive recognition of principles more fundamental than public-school morality. It is the sensation of hitting a ball perfectly or taking a pass which matters, not the piling up of runs or the goal which ensues. And this introduces Antæus in another of his aspects—in his craving for the food of rich sensations. It is not only the instinct to make sure as well as he can whether he could survive in the circumstances of Adam newly turned out of Eden that urges him to keep in touch with the earth. A subtler hunger is also at work, a hunger of the senses which under modern conditions it is at least equally difficult and equally imperative to satisfy.

A few years ago, a business man whom I wot of journeyed to Japan on a commercial errand. He stayed in that country exactly twenty-four hours. His purpose in going was to sign an important document, and the ink of his signature was scarcely dry before he had boarded the trans-Siberian express and was on his way home. "And meanwhile"—as Mr. Aldous Huxley exclaimed in his diary when the 'very good time' of bridge parties and dancing and cocktails which he was to expect in India was glowingly sketched for him during the voyage—"and meanwhile the beautiful, incredible world awaits our exploration and life is short and time flows stanchlessly like blood from a mortal wound."

A capacity for turning neither to the right hand nor to the left, such as that of my gentleman of Japan is astounding. The man might have sailed past the siren's rock without ever finding the necessity to lash himself to the mast. What was really the bedrock of his mentality, whether a sort of submersion of his whole personality in the particular job on hand, or just mere absence of curiosity about life, I leave to more expert psychologists to determine. He is cited here because he is in effect such a finished specimen of a type that is being moulded with ever increasing ruthlessness by these twentieth-century conditions of Thanksgivings for tinned salmon and the like. Whether they care for it or no, most occupied people do have to take a more or less deep impress of the mould. They are required to spend the greater part of their lives on pursuits which do not give much more play to

curiosity than going to Japan for twenty-four hours. The imagination of Antæus lives on short commons because for one reason or another he gets numb to the sensations which feed it. Bewildered by this scrambling civilisation, it is hard for him not to slide dazedly or batter his path through the world—like a shuttleful of thread shot willy nilly across the loom to do the business demanded of him without ever perceiving the hue and texture of the other threads which go to make up the marvellous warp and woof. This, no doubt, is more the blame of the System than of Antæus who has to fit his life into it. The System has laid down a series of grooves of specialised work, and as year by year goes on, it requires more specialised work and stiffer work to keep its complex parts working in harmony. The pressure gets higher and higher. Half a century ago, Matthew Arnold could cry out in one of his disgruntled moods :

No shelter to grow ripe is ours
No leisure to grow wise.

Life had started to move on too high a gear even for some of the full-blooded Victorians ; and if full-blooded Victorians were beginning to find that, what shall be said of our wearier Georgians ? Work may be the bread and butter grind of a clerk or a bus driver ; it may be to keep moving mighty influences like the Managing Director of a great firm ; it may be the enthralling pursuits of the man of science ; whatever it be, in the nature of the case, work entails a giving out of

virtue rather than a taking in. It is capable of burnishing every faculty but one, and that one is the receptive faculty—the faculty by means of which a man attains to all those impressions and sensations which repair his being. The workers recklessly empty the cisterns of their energy without ever a thought to the conduits from which those cisterns must be refilled. Is it not, perhaps, this careless, ceaseless drain without proper contrivance for replenishment that causes the hectic and unstable set of values complained of against our curious century?

I fear that it may seem almost in bad taste to link so debonair a notion as holiday-making to this heavy and frequently argued problem. Yet here exactly it is that holidays come in. Antæus has one golden chance of keeping his feet upon the earth so that his energies may be replenished, and that is when he doffs for a space his working mental attire, sticks a feather in his cap and says to the world: "Come, woo me, woo me, for now I am in a holiday humour." For, in holidays, the workaday position is reversed. Instead of a man contributing what he can to the sum of life, life comes to him with loaded arms and bids him choose what he will to furnish his own depleted stocks. He becomes a register of impressions; he transmutes them into sensations and stores their virtue in his barns of experience.

I suppose that Proust might be considered as the exponent *par excellence* of the philosophy by us moderns. But Proust was careless about the nature of his experiences. I prefer the theory as it was expressed almost half a century ago:

Every moment some form grows perfect in hand or face, some tone on the hills or the sea is choicer than the rest; some mood of passion or insight or intellectual excitement is irresistibly real and attractive to us,—for that moment only. Not the fruit of experience, but experience itself is the end. A counted number of pulses only is given to us of variegated dramatic life. How may we see in them all that is to be seen in them by the finest senses? How shall we pass most swiftly from point to point, and be present always at the focus where the greatest number of vital forces unite in their purest energy?

The passage sums up with consummate insight the delight of holidays. For once it is not the fruit of experience but experience itself that matters, as Pater says. We are free to do and feel and with no ulterior motive. Archimedes, stepping into his bath, shall clear his mind from hydrostatic problems and realise the pleasure of splashing and soaping and sluicing his body with hot water. Watt, waiting for his tea, shall

Listen to the flapping of the flame
Or kettle whispering its sweet undersong

in the passive mood of Wordsworth's sonnet and with never a thought as to the engineering possibilities of steam.

Where these experiences are to be found and how a man should train the receiving faculty for their welcome are matters, it would seem, for his own private discovery. At a Mozart Recital in a London concert-room, a short while ago, there was a young man, of the type that

Mr. Belloc defines as "nordic," who sat through the first half of the programme to outward view as unmoved as any other member of the audience. But, inwardly, he must have been rapt to ecstasy, for when the interval came, he turned to his neighbour, a perfect stranger. It seemed as if the walls of his shamefaced English reticence could contain his pleasure no longer. He said that no sexual experience he had ever known had approached his present sensation of enjoyment, and the only feeling he knew of to equal it was hitting a boundary at cricket. In his working life this young man may have been grinding his reserves away on the sheer dullness of his occupation, or he may have had his whole energy dedicated with prodigal abandon to the pursuit of some interest which was master of his mind. But the feeding pipes of his reservoir of energy were not all blocked up ; along two conduits at least he was able to take in vitality to compensate the vitality which work drew out of him. Two sensations were powerful to flood his being, take him for a space right out of himself and then let him slip back, but with his strength renewed and his balance readjusted. The one was the feel of a cricket ball driven triumphantly from his bat to the distant boundary, the other was the sound of the fairy phrases of Mozart. In either case it was the immediateness of the enjoyment that counted. Complete in itself, it dropped into his treasury like a gem.

The young man was versed, to some extent at any rate, in the holiday art of making the world woo him. He may have had other chances of enticing the world

to make love which he failed to seize, or his chances may have been limited to concerts and cricket. But then most people miss opportunities and everyone is more or less limited. Like the goats you see tethered along Irish roads, all men are hobbled by circumstances with varying radii of freedom.

I've never seen a Jaguar
Nor yet an Armadill—
O dilloing in his armour
And I s'pose I never will.

is true in some kind or degree for the freest of mankind. This is not to concur unreservedly, however, in the well-worn theory that the holiday art is dependent upon an attitude of mind and that limitations of time or space have very little to do with success or failure in practising it. Certainly, the statement is mostly true. If your mood be right in, say, Sheffield, you can get the world to woo you even there very delightfully, and if your mood be wrong in the Alps, you could watch the sun set from Mont Blanc without being any the richer for it. Spencer Gore, an obscure painter who died young, found more beauty in a shabby square north of Euston than most people would find in the Parthenon. But that does not prove that the sum of Mornington Crescent and the Parthenon is not greater than either alone, or even that the neighbourhood of North Euston is necessarily as reviving food for the mind as the Acropolis. There is one glory of the sun and another of the moon, and the richest man is he who has the opportunity to

contrast them both. That is the little worm of falsehood which lies coiled at the core of the attitude-of-mind theory. Like the other commonplace that happiness is independent of material things, it savours too much of a philosophy invented by us comparative "haves" to ease our consciences in regard to "have-nots." For us to say that an attitude is all-sufficient and that circumstances make no difference—we who have grown up among fields and hills and wide spaces, who have learned to draw our strength from beauty and physical delight, who have seen pictures and great buildings and heard noble music, who have dived into pools of Scottish burns in the sunlight and breasted sea-waves and heard the song of ice-flakes scuttering away from the axe down an Alpine slope—for us to talk like that would be hypocrisy. A cant, too, which would not be more excusable because a number of mankind do miss opportunities that are afforded to them :

Why do you walk through the field in gloves,
When the grass is soft as the breast of doves
And shivering sweet to the touch ?
O why do you walk through the field in gloves
Missing so much and so much ?

There is a famous gibe of Henry of Navarre at the expense of the greatest of his captains who was absent from the battle of Arques. "Pends-toi, brave Crillon ; nous avons vaincu à Arques, mais tu n'y étais pas !" The story does not relate why Crillon was absent from the battle. That does not matter ; it was won without his participation. Whether through our own fault or

no, we are continually finding ourselves in Crillon's humiliating position. Some chance of holiday glory has presented itself and we were not there to seize it. Henry's gibe hits us all—all, that is, except poets and children. They always seem to contrive to be in at Arques. Perhaps, because to them nothing is uninteresting on *a priori* grounds, but everything is worth a trial of attention. It is their prized faculty to be able constantly to apprehend the earth anew with senses as fresh and excited as those of Adam must have been when he made his first tour of inspection of Eden. They are the perfect holiday-makers.



"OPEN-ROAD" BOOKS

Published by

J. M. Dent & Sons, Limited

Aldine House, Bedford St., London, W.C.2

OBTAINABLE FROM ALL BOOKSELLERS

ABOUT ENGLAND

BY M. V. HUGHES

"A new sort of Guide Book," containing "things even a Policeman doesn't know!"—EVENING NEWS.

"The ideal book for the tourist, for the student, for the simple lover of England who may live within sound of Bow Bells. . . . The most astonishing amount of interesting, unusual and entertaining information. Begins by making the reader look at England with fresh eyes, and, having done so, proceeds to our national subject, the weather, then . . . to a complete story of London ancient and modern . . . thence to the country, with suggested pilgrimages. . . . A delightful book, packed from beginning to end with valuable matter."—SUNDAY TIMES.

With coloured frontispiece and many line-drawings.

Second Impression. 5s. net.

¶ Prospectus post free.

*

THE OLD COUNTRY

EDITED BY ERNEST RHYS

This book of love and praise of England was first published during the war for those who, being abroad, were bound to be visited by home-thoughts. It has since been revised and enlarged, and forms an anthology of the finest passages in verse and prose, by authors from Shakespeare to the present day, which express the spirit of "the old country."

With sixteen coloured plates and other illustrations.

Leather, 6s. net. Cloth, 4s. 6d. net.

FOUR BOON FELLOWS

BY ALFRED J. BROWN

Set among the Yorkshire dales and the high places of the Pennines, this account of a novel walking-tour in robust, provocative dialogue form is at once racy, unconventional and exhilarating, for this walking-tour is a new Crusade "to restore the rights and usages of Man Two-leggèd on the Open Road," a gesture of defiance "against the massed might of the 'Hogs.'" Here, cunningly mixed, are abundance of high spirits, fine command of language; a plenitude of local lore and legends; a store of songs; and withal a witty presentation of the many-sided genius of the Yorkshire character. This is a book for all lovers of the Open Road.

Crown 8vo. 7s. 6d. net.

★

THE KUKLOS PAPERS

BY FITZWATER WRAY

Under the guise of "Kuklos," Mr. Fitzwater Wray has long been (to employ his self-description) "a blend of fingerpost and father-confessor to the cycling world." The essays and storyettes here collected treat in stimulating and musical prose of cycle runs, roads, people, and experiences awheel and on foot.

"This book, in its humour and its breadth of spirit, recalls Robert Louis Stevenson. Mr. Wray is a writer of singular power and delicacy."—YORKSHIRE POST.

"A very agreeable collection of essays . . . pictures of all sorts and classes of people, convincingly and objectively set down, without fuss and with considerable ability."—*Edwin Muir* in THE NATION.

"They have fine literary quality and exhibit a sensitive feeling for the good things of life."—JOHN O'LONDON'S WEEKLY.

With five illustrations in black and white by the Author.

Small crown 8vo. 3s 6d. net.

HILLS AND HIGHWAYS

BY KATHARINE C. CHORLEY

The blithe philosophy of the sentimental traveller supplies the inspiration which blends the diverse impressions and experiences recorded in this book. Now we are exploring the crags and fells of English lakeland, now welcoming the dawn from the alpine height of the Aiguille Verte, or plunging into the "Unknown Gorge" after sundown. These wayfaring essays should appeal to all who like to spend their holiday off the beaten track and who find their spiritual home among the high hills.

With woodcut decorations by Margaret Pilkington.
Crown 8vo. 7s. 6d. net.

★

PEAKS, PASSES & GLACIERS

EDITED BY E. H. BLAKENEY

This selection from the renowned records of the Alpine Club covers the period from 1854 to 1865, which may fairly be described as the "Classic Age" of mountaineering. It contains papers by sixteen writers, including Sir Alfred Wills, Sir Leslie Stephen and Edward Whymper, and two poems and an introduction by E. H. Blakeney.

Cloth, 2s. net. Library Binding, 3s. net.
(Everyman's Library No. 778.)

★

MOUNTAIN ESSAYS

BY FAMOUS CLIMBERS

EDITED BY E. F. BOZMAN.

A book of general essays on mountaineering by well-known climbers, including Geoffrey Winthrop Young, John Tyndall, Sir Martin Conway, and Sir Leslie Stephen. It also contains two accounts of the attempts to reach the summit of Mount Everest, one by N. E. Odell, the other by G. L. Mallory, who lost his life in the third expedition.

(Kings Treasuries No. 166.) 1s. 4d.

CATHEDRALS, ABBEYS AND FAMOUS CHURCHES

EDITED AND ILLUSTRATED BY GORDON HOME

In this attractive and beautifully produced new Series the authors succeed in making their subjects live by communicating their enthusiasm for history, biography, and architecture. The delightful new photographs and original drawings by the editor form a special feature of the series. The over-familiar and commonplace view-points are avoided and an entirely new aspect of the buildings is given in nearly every instance.

EXETER, TRURO AND THE WEST

BY EDWARD FOORD

CHESTER, MANCHESTER AND LIVERPOOL

BY BEATRICE HOME

GLOUCESTER, TEWKESBURY AND DISTRICT

BY EDWARD FOORD

WELLS, GLASTONBURY AND CLEEVE

BY EDWARD FOORD

ST. PAUL'S AND SOUTHWARK

BY E. BERESFORD CHANCELLOR

H. E. POWELL-JONES AND EDWARD FOORD

HEREFORD AND TINTERN

BY EDWARD FOORD

OXFORD AND NEIGHBOURHOOD

BY CECIL HEADLAM

ST. DAVID'S, LLANDAFF AND BRECON

BY EDWARD FOORD

WESTMINSTER ABBEY

BY BEATRICE HOME

WINCHESTER AND SALISBURY

BY EDWARD FOORD

WORCESTER, MALVERN AND BIRMINGHAM

BY J. PENDEREL-BRODHURST

BRISTOL, BATH AND MALMESBURY

BY GORDON HOME

F'cap 8vo. Cloth, 2s. 6d. net each. Leather, 4s. 6d. net each.
¶ *Prospectus post free.*

THE THROUGH GUIDES

BY GORDON HOME

These ideal holiday guides are, in the words of the *Manchester Guardian*, "nicely compounded of history, topography and landscape." The *New Statesman* says they "should attract the walker who has a real interest in English scenery and tradition"; and, on the recommendation of the *Architectural Review*, "the illustrations are excellent, and type, paper and binding are as good as could be desired." The *Times Literary Supplement* describes them as "Well illustrated, deftly arranged and pleasantly written."

THROUGH YORKSHIRE

THROUGH EAST ANGLIA

THROUGH THE CHILTERN TO THE FENS

THROUGH THE BORDERS

TO THE HEART OF SCOTLAND

Pocket Size. Profusely illustrated. With map end-papers.
2s. 6d. net each.

★

ALONG THE RIVIERAS OF FRANCE AND ITALY

BY GORDON HOME

In this favourite book on the Riviera, which is now issued in a revised edition, Mr. Gordon Home describes every place along the coast from Marseilles to Pisa, their history, works of art, and places of beauty.

With 16 coloured plates and many line drawings by the Author.
Demy 8vo. 7s. 6d. net.

★

PARIS FOR EVERYMAN

BY ARTHUR K. GRIGGS

This handy atlas and guide-book is intended to help visitors to the "queen of cities" to make the fullest and most intelligent use of their time, and will increase their delights, their discoveries, and their comforts.

With forty-eight coloured maps and full index.
Small Crown 8vo. 2s. 6d. net.

MEDIÆVAL TOWNS SERIES

LITERARY GUIDES

An attractive series of pocketable volumes, each forming both a Literary-History and a Guide-book. Numerous illustrations by Nelly Erichsen, Herbert Railton, S. Cooper, K. Kimball, Dora Noyes, H. M. James, and other artists. "Tourists on the Continent will find that these volumes are excellent guide-books."—DAILY NEWS.

ASSISI. BY LINA DUFF GORDON	[Revised Edition]
AVIGNON. BY THOMAS OKEY	[Second Edition]
BOLOGNA. BY ALETHEA WIEL	
BRUGES. BY ERNEST GILLIAT-SMITH	[Sixth Edition]
BRUSSELS. BY ERNEST GILLIAT-SMITH	
CAIRO. BY STANLEY LANE-POOLE	[Fourth Edition]
CAMBRIDGE. BY THE RT. REV. C. W. STUBBS, D.D.	[Fourth Edition]
CANTERBURY. BY G. R. STIRLING TAYLOR	
CHARTRES. BY CECIL HEADLAM	[Third Edition]
CONSTANTINOPLE. BY W. H. HUTTON	[Fifth Edition]
COVENTRY. BY MARY DORMER HARRIS	
DUBLIN. BY D. A. CHART	
EDINBURGH. BY OLIPHANT SMEATON	[Second Edition]
FERRARA. BY ELLA NOYES	
FLORENCE. BY EDMUND G. GARDNER	[Revised Edition, 1928]
JERUSALEM. BY COL. SIR C. M. WATSON	[Second Edition]
LONDON. BY H. B. WHEATLEY	[Fourth Edition]
LUCCA. BY JANET ROSS AND NELLY ERICHSEN	
MILAN. BY ELLA NOYES	[Second Edition]
MOSCOW. BY WIRT GERRARE	[Third Edition]
NAPLES. BY CECIL HEADLAM	
NUREMBERG. BY CECIL HEADLAM	[Sixth Edition]
OXFORD. BY CECIL HEADLAM	[Fourth Edition]
PADUA. BY C. FOLIGNO	
PARIS. BY THOMAS OKEY	[Fourth Edition]
PERUGIA. BY MARGARET SYMONDS AND LINA DUFF GORDON	[Eighth Edition, Revised 1927]
PISA. BY JANET ROSS	
PRAGUE. BY COUNT LÜTZOW	[Fourth Edition]
RAVENNA. BY EDWARD HUTTON	
ROME. BY NORWOOD YOUNG	[Ninth Edition]
ROUEN. BY T. A. COOK	[Fifth Edition]
SEVILLE. BY W. M. GALLICHAN	[Third Edition]
SIENA. BY EDMUND G. GARDNER	[Fifth Edition]
VENICE. BY THOMAS OKEY	[Sixth Edition]
VERONA. BY ALETHEA WIEL	[Fourth Edition]

F'cap 8vo. Cloth Gilt, 5s. 6d. net each.

THE WORKS OF W. H. HUDSON

"Hudson was a chief among his fellows, but the tribes over whom he threw the mantle of his understanding . . . were not human, but the vast tribes of Nature's wild creatures."—*Edward Garnett*.

"This is an edition which every honest book-lover and book-reader can take to his heart and find room for on his shelves."—*Rt. Hon. Augustine Birrell* in *THE SPHERE*.

AFOOT IN ENGLAND NATURE IN DOWNLAND
HAMPSHIRE DAYS THE LAND'S END
ADVENTURES AMONG BIRDS BIRDS IN LONDON
BIRDS IN TOWN AND VILLAGE
THE BOOK OF A NATURALIST
FAR AWAY AND LONG AGO
IDLE DAYS IN PATAGONIA
A TRAVELLER IN LITTLE THINGS
DEAD MAN'S PLACK, AN OLD THORN, & POEMS

Twelve Volumes. Small Demy 8vo. 6s. net each.

¶ *Complete prospectus post free.*

★

A FOOTPATH WAY IN GLOUCESTERSHIRE

BY ALGERNON GISSING

Written with the simplicity of a nature-lover and great beauty of expression, this is a little epic of English country life.

With decorations by John Garside.

Large Crown 8vo. 5s. net.

★

THE GYPSY LIFE OF BETSY WOOD

BY M. EILEEN LYSTER

FOREWORD BY JOHN SAMPSON

This book gives a faithful and beautiful picture of Welsh gypsy life, which will appeal to the gypsy-lore enthusiast as a real contribution to the knowledge of a little-explored field, and to the general reader for its fine human story.

With decorations by John Garside.

Crown 8vo, 6s. net.

THE WAYFARER'S LIBRARY

The Wayfarer's Library embraces all that is healthy and vigorous in modern literature, from works of pure fiction to the best essays of to-day. Amongst the authors represented are Joseph Conrad, Arnold Bennett, H. G. Wells, Maurice Hewlett, G. K. Chesterton, the late President Wilson, R. L. Stevenson, Stanley Weyman, and W. H. Hudson. The Library is designed to serve the special needs of the traveller, and from its total of over one hundred volumes a fine "open-road" selection can be made—amongst them Hudson's *Afoot in England*, Q's romances and Cornish tales, Lord George Sanger's *Seventy Years a Showman*, and the essays of "Alpha of the Plough."

Pocket Size (F'cap 8vo). 1s. 6d. net each volume.

¶ *List of over 100 volumes post free.*

★

EVERYMAN'S LIBRARY

OVER 400 AUTHORS

OVER 800 VOLUMES OF LITERARY MASTERPIECES

ENGLISH, CLASSICAL, AND FOREIGN

"A cosmic convulsion might utterly destroy all the other printed works in the world, and still, if a complete set of Everyman's Library floated upon the waters, enough would be preserved to carry on the unbroken tradition of literature. Everyman's Library is a very remarkable phenomenon, and one which does credit to our civilisation."

—*Sir Edmund Gosse* in THE SUNDAY TIMES.

Cloth 2s. net each. Library Binding, 3s. net each.

260 volumes in leather, 3s. 6d. net each.

Reference Section: Cloth, 2s. 6d. net. Library Binding, 3s. 6d. net.

¶ *64-paged Descriptive Booklet post free.*

J. M. DENT & SONS LIMITED
ALDINE HOUSE BEDFORD STREET LONDON W.C. 2

